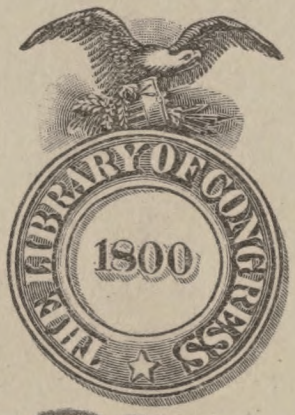

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Six Days in the Life of an Ex-Teacher

BY

JOHN HABBERTON

AUTHOR OF "HELEN'S BABIES," "OUT AT TWINNETT'S," ETC.

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WELL OUT OF IT.

Six Days in the Life of an Ex-Teacher.

FIRST DAY.

I WAS A SCHOOL-MA'AM.

If any one had told me, a few years ago, that the time would come when I should industriously devote five days of every seven to the teaching of stupid children and the disorganization of my own nerves, I should have classed him among the false prophets. But there came a love-affair which resulted unpleasantly; it was merely the old story of a man marrying one woman while another who loved him better was hesitating to say "yes." Coming of stock whose attachments are few but strong, I did not recover quietly and cheerily, like some feminine experts at the game of love,

and our family physician, who seemed to suspect the truth, prescribed steady mental occupation as the only probable cure for my low spirits.

So I became a teacher in a public school, and the desired effect was slowly attained. I ought to have learned to love the school-room for what it did for me, but I did not. Once familiar with the routine, and successful beyond my expectation, it seemed wrong to abandon the work, particularly as the city children of whom my classes were composed were the most uninteresting of their kind, and consequently the most needy. Nevertheless, when vacation came and my family agreed that a month in the country was necessary to my physical well-being, I advertised for a boarding-house in which there were no children of any age or condition.

The place which I finally selected seemed a veritable haven of rest. It was kept by two old ladies who knew the value of peace and quietness, and whose house was in the centre of a large estate, the eastern edge of which commanded a view upon which no child could intrude without first crossing the Atlantic Ocean. There was not a house in sight; yet I had scarcely swung a hammock in a little cluster of pines, and become in-

terested in the first chapter of a novel, when I was disturbed by a childish voice exclaiming:

"Hello!"

"Go away, little girl; go right away," said I, as I turned my head and saw a small figure consisting principally of large blue eyes, yellow hair, and dirty calico frock.

"I don't fink you's very polite," said the little creature, without moving.

"There are times when politeness is a mistake," said I. The child, still immovable, stared and replied:

"I's sorry for you. My gran'ma finks ev'ybody ought to be sorried for dat wasn't brought up to speak polite to strangers. Didn't you have no gran'ma—or muvver—to teach you to talk nice?"

I rose quickly to give the little upstart one of the glances which had always been sufficient to annihilate an impudent pupil. The hammock was not in sympathy with me: it was one of those loose-netted Mexican abominations which always act just as they shouldn't, so in a second or two I found myself in a most undignified position on the great mattress of pine-needles that covered the ground.

"You did dat dreadful funny!" said the child,

after a hearty peal of laughter. "Let's see if I can't do it."

Before I could recover my dignity, the child had climbed into the hammock and was making frantic struggles to fall out. She was so small and light, however, that she remained like a bundle in the bottom of the net, and her struggles merely gave her face a great deal of color and made her eyes brighter. Finally she sighed:

" I guess I'll have to get rested; after dat, you can show me how to do it." Then she composed herself in the hammock, and continued: "You can swing me, if you want to; I like to swing in hammocks."

"So do I," said I, with all the impressiveness that five years of authority over children had given me. The child looked wonderingly at me for a moment, and then merrily shouted:

"Come along, den. I guess I can make room for you." Suiting the action to the word, the midget sat upright and nodded invitingly.

I was beginning to be amused, though only in the manner of the cat who plays with the mouse whom she intends soon to slay. As I sat down the child cuddled close to me, put a chubby hand in mine, and said:

"You must hold me tight, now, so I can't drop out."

"A moment ago," said I, as I put an arm around the child, "you wanted to drop out."

"Oh, yes, but dat was *den;* an' dis is *now.* Don't you see? Now go on swingin'."

I put one foot to the ground to set the hammock in motion, and the wee thing began to sing:

Swing—swong,
Swing—swong,
Swing, ah, swingee, swing, swong!

This ridiculous jingle continued for some moments, but finally a bar was succeeded by:

"Say! if you don't swing faster I can't keep breff enough to sing."

"That would indeed be sad," said I. "Don't you think, now, it is time for you to go home?"

"No, indeed," said the child; "we won't have dinner for ever so long."

"And do you mean to remain here until then?" I asked, with a downward glance intended to be withering.

"Why, to be sure; where else is I to go?"

"I'm sure I don't know; but I want to read and be quiet."

"Oh, well," said the child, "dere won't be any trouble 'bout dat, I guess. You can be as quiet as you want to; I can do all de talkin'."

"How thoughtful of you!" I murmured.

"Oh, is it?" said she, her eyes brightening. "I'll tell gran'ma you said dat, an' den she'll give me a penny. She's tryin' ever so hard to make me foughtful."

"I fear your grandma has a hard task before her. What is your name, little girl?"

"Alice Hope."

"Well, Alice, if you'll run away now, and leave me with my book, I will be very much obliged to you."

"Is you learnin' a lesson from de book?"

"No, I'm merely reading a story."

"Oh, well, gran'ma don't fink much of people dat reads stories in de mornin', when dere's so much work to be done."

"I'm glad, then, for your grandma's sake, that I am not one of her children this summer."

"But gran'ma's awful nice. All de little girls I know would ravver have her dan deir own gran'-mas. She's always got peppermint candies in her pocket."

Peppermint! Every woman of the slums who

ever came to me to complain of my treatment of her child chewed some candied preparation of peppermint. I could thank my visitor for awakening some most abhorrent memories. Her grandmother was probably a horrid old village crone, who managed her son's or daughter's family as if it were her own. This child, who, I was slowly realizing, was quite pretty, and with intelligent features—had she no parents?

"Alice," said I, "why don't your mother put a clean dress on you before she lets you go out to visit strangers?"

"My muvver?" exclaimed the child, with wide-open eyes, which soon began to twinkle roguishly. "How do you s'pose she could put clothes on me, 'way down here, when she's 'way up in de sky?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said I quickly and kindly. "You see, I didn't know your mother was dead."

"She isn't dead; she's just as alive as you. You don't s'pose dere's dead folks up in de sky, do you? Why, dey'd drop down an' all smash to bits. *You* wouldn't like to be dead if you was up dere, would you?"

"N—no; I suppose not," said I; "and I am very

sorry for you, little Alice, that your mother isn't with you."

"*I* isn't," said the youngster, as cheerily as if losing a mother were not a matter of grief. "She don't have to be sick any more, nor be bovvered 'bout servants, which gran'ma says is dreadful, an' she can sing all she wants to, an' her clothes never gets dirty, like mine is once in a while."

"How do you know?"

"'Cause gran'ma says so; dat's how. An' my fahver says she was just de kind to enjoy heaven, 'cause she didn't ever like trouble."

"We would all be up in the sky, I suppose, if dislike of trouble would put us there. But some one ought to see that your dresses are kept clean. All the children who come to my school, no matter how poor they are, must wear clean clothes."

"Does you keep a school?" asked the child, suddenly looking very sober. "I guess I'll go 'way from you, den."

"Stop, please," I said in haste. "Alice, dear little girl, I'm not dreadful, though I chance to be a teacher. You were telling me about your mother."

"Yes. You don't s'pose my muvver is goin' to take care of my clothes now, do you, while she's

up in de sky? She can't have no nasty old wash-tubs up dere, 'cause dere wouldn't be noffin' dere to stand 'em on, you know. Say! is you got any children?"

"Only some that belong to other people."

"Wh-y-y-y! Well, if you takes care of uvver folks' little girls, an' likes to do it, you can wash my clothes for me yourself, if you want to."

"Thanks, but that's a little beyond my capacity. Do you go to school?"

"No. I don't like to go to school. School-teachers is horrid."

"Thanks again. Where did you learn your letters?"

"Don't know any letters, only what's in my name. Dey're all dat's mine. Say! can you climb trees?"

"No: it isn't lady-like to climb trees."

"Can you make dams?"

"No: it isn't lady-like to make dams, either."

There was a pause, and a searching, pitying look. Then the child sighed:

"I's awful sorry for you, dat you has to be lady-like. Say! it isn't not-lady-like to eat sassafras-bark, is it—just to bite it off of de littlest branches—de very littlest?"

"I fear it is."

"O you poor fing!" she sighed, throwing her arms around my skirts. "I's awful sorry for you."

"Thanks for your sympathy, little girl." The child's embrace was so close and long that I could not help returning it. Suddenly she released me, looked soberly into my face, and asked:

"Say! it isn't not-lady-like for you to play wiff dolls, is it?"

"I—I scarcely know; I shall have to think about it."

"Well, dere's one way to find out: you can try. I'll go get my dolls an' bring 'em up here; an' you play wiff 'em, an' if you don't do it lady-like I'll tell you. You needn't be afraid I won't; for my dolls is very particular 'bout how dey's played wiff—all of 'em but Agonies."

"Agonies?"

"Yes: Agonies is a low-downer, gran'ma says—always gettin' down on de floor and in de dirt. I can't teach her no manners at all. You stay here while I go bring 'em, an' while I'm gone you can take your fink 'bout whether it's lady-like to play wiff 'em."

The child tumbled out of the hammock and tripped away with an odd motion like the steps of

a waltz, while I began to wonder how I had so patiently endured the interruption. I followed her with my eyes until she was hidden by the shrubbery. She certainly was a picturesque, merry, confiding little creature—quite unlike the solid, suspicious beings whom it had been my daily lot to meet. Already I felt guilty at the dislike of children that had taken possession of me. But it was not all my fault. If Frank Wayne hadn't been impatient at my hesitation, and married a pretty-faced doll, I should never have been tormented almost to death in a class-room and learned to hate the sight of children. 'Twas all his fault—not mine. The thought threw me into moody musing, as the recollection of my great sorrow always did. How long it might have continued I do not know, for it was interrupted in a few moments by—

"Well, isn't you done dat fink yet? I didn't s'pose it would make you look so sad."

Raising my head quickly, I saw before me little Alice and a collection of dolls such as I did not imagine could be found outside of the play-room of an infant asylum. I endeavored to count them, but the effort ended abruptly when the child leaned over me and dropped her entire family into the

hammock, most of them falling on my head and face.

"Dere!" she exclaimed. "I's like de old woman dat lived inashoe—I's got so many children I don't know what to do. Say! you must be careful!"—for I was struggling to extricate myself from the mass of figures, limbs, and skirts. "You'll hurt some of 'em. I don't fink you'd make a very nice muvver, if you'd treat uvver children like you treat mine."

"I beg your pardon," said I, extricating myself from the hammock, "but really——"

"Dere! You's doin' it again!" shrieked the child, picking up a doll which had escaped from the hammock with me. "I do declare if it ain't Agonies! Dat child does beat all for gettin' in de dirt! When any of 'em tumbles down I just know it's Agonies, first fing."

"Where did you get the name of that doll, Alice?"

"Named her after gran'ma's cook; looks just like her—always mussy."

I thought a moment, and then asked:

"Is the cook's name Agnes?"

"Well," said the child, half contemptuously, half despairingly, "if her name isn't Agonies,

how could my doll's name be Agonies, I'd like to know?"

There seemed no appropriate answer to this question, so I said:

"I wouldn't have misunderstood you if you had talked plainer. How old are you, Alice?"

"Five years old."

"You're old enough to speak plain,' then, and I'll teach you if you like."

"But I don't like. My fahver says he believes he would kill somebody if dey'd make me talk plain. You wouldn't like to be killed, would you —not before you got acquainted wiff my dolls?"

"It might be advisable to die first," said I, looking at the sprawling figures that covered the bottom of the hammock. Meanwhile the doll mother began to arrange the disordered garments of her brood, and to seat each doll decorously in the hammock. When all was done she looked along the line with an air of motherly satisfaction, and said:

"Which one would you rather be introduced to first?"

"I think," said I, glancing along the line, "that Agnes looks like the class of children I am most used to. Her face and clothing and general ap-

pearance remind me strongly of some old acquaintances."

"Den I'm afraid," said the child, looking at me critically, "dat you wasn't well brought up. *I* don't like Agonies much, but I's dreadful sorry for her—she's such a forlorn wretch. I could just cry, sometimes, when I fink about what Agonies is."

How often had I felt thus to some repellent little wretch in my class-room! The thought of it made me surprise little Alice by picking her up and kissing her—an act which, I confess, surprised me also.

"You're a soft-hearted little dear," I said as I released her.

"Well," she replied, "my fahver says a soft heart is better dan a hard head."

"Your papa is a discerning man," said I.

"Of course he is, if di-surnin means somefin' nice. Well, if you fink Agonies is most like you, you'd better begin playin' wiff her, 'cause it'll be her bedtime 'fore long. Just look at her foot, where de kitten pulled two of her toes off. I couldn't be sorry for her like I ought to, first time I saw her toes wasn't dere, cause dey didn't look like dey'd bleeded any, so I just rubbed some

strawberry on de place to make it look like bleedin', den I cried like ev'ryfin'—why, I cried two whole hankecheffs full! I didn't spank her for about a week—I just couldn't have de heart to do it, dough she was bein' awful bad all de whole time."

"Poor Agnes!" said I, picking up the limp, dingy doll as one would lift an unattractive kitten from the mud.

"She likes to be kissed," said the child. I did not act upon this suggestion, so Alice continued: "An' I don't fink she likes to have her name made short like you do it. You oughtn't to call her 'Agnes'; you ought to say Agonies."

"Agonies?"

"Yes: dat's 'bout it, I guess."

For an hour or more my new acquaintance prattled on and played with her dolls, talking to them quite as much as to me, and treating them entirely as if they were human beings. I marvelled for a little while that any one's imaginative faculty could be so strong; but finally I found myself drifting into sincere admiration of the child herself. I guiltily called myself to account, and reminded myself of the principal stipulation I had made in advertising for a boarding-place. What would my venerable landladies say should they

see me taking so much interest in a child whom I had never seen until that day? What peace or rest would I get if I allowed myself to be visited daily by this small visitor and her brood of dolls? I must banish her at once, empty my hammock of counterfeit humanity, and resume the quiet lounging for which I had come to the country.

I waited for an appropriate moment, studying the child's face in the mean time. The fresh complexion, cheerful manner, and entire lack of consciousness were so unlike what my profession doomed me to see in children that I moaned as I realized how entirely some phases of child-nature had escaped my notice and sympathy. Little Alice caught the sound, which I had imagined inaudible to any one but myself. She turned quickly and exclaimed:

"Wonder which of my children it was dat made dat noise, like as if dey wasn't happy 'bout somefin'!"

Then she looked at me with mock severity, and continued: "Why, I do believe it's you! De idea! A great big girl like you makin' such a grumble as dat! I should fink you was awful hungry, an' had to wait ever so long yet for your dinner."

"I am hungry, little girl—heart-hungry," said

I, thinking aloud rather than intending to speak so plainly.

"Well, I don't see where you spec's to get any hearts to eat," said the child. "Never heard of anybody eatin' hearts, anyhow."

"You didn't understand me rightly," said I.

"Tell me all 'bout it, den," said she, abandoning her dolls and again clasping my knees and looking up into my face. The child's countenance was like an angel's, it seemed to me, so pure and full of soul. But while I wondered whether to reply, and how, little Alice suddenly changed her pose; she relaxed her grasp, stood upright, and turned her head as if intently listening, then exclaimed:

"Sure's I live, that's our dinner-bell. I's got to go. You can tell me all 'bout it some uvver time. Your tell can wait, don't you see? but my hungry can't wait a single second longer, seems to me."

"You are forgetting your dolls," said I coldly, as the heartless infant who preferred dinner to me started skippingly away.

"Oh! no, I isn't," she said, with a backward toss of her head. "I's leavin' 'em for you to play wiff. Dey hasn't had a chance at such a nice

hammock in a long time, an' I hasn't de heart to make 'em come home."

The signal for my own dinner was given soon afterward, and as I was as yet the only boarder, I naturally chatted with my landladies at table, and had to guard my tongue closely to keep from asking questions about my new acquaintance. To avoid committing myself, I hurried back to the hammock, removed all the dolls, laid them side by side on the pine-leaves, found my novel, and resumed the thread of the story. I soon was absorbed in the joys and woes of the author's characters, and had forgotten Alice Hope and her make-believe family; but a little while afterward I heard a familiar voice exclaiming:

"Well, if I ever!"

I looked over the edge of the hammock; there stood little Alice, with a sober, puzzled face, contemplating her dolls.

She stared at them a moment or two, turned gravely toward me, and said:

"You don't understand dolls very well, do you? You've gone an' sent 'em to bed all wrong. There's Mahjerie Daw and Missis Bond side by side. Anybody ought to know dose two oughtn't ever to be togevver; dey fights awful."

"Don't be silly, little girl; they——"

"Oh, you fink I's silly, do you? Well, you'll know better one of dese days, I hope. An' dere's Captain Jinks an' Black Peter right aside of each uvver. I wonder de captain don't frow Pete away; Pete always sleeps down at de captain's feet—so." Suiting the action to the word, the child carefully rearranged her insensate charges.

"Alice, I like to see little girls play with their dolls, but it isn't sensible to pretend that they are real people."

"Goodness! You's dreadful sensible, isn't you? Don't you ever make b'lieve *your* dolls is real folks?"

"I haven't any dolls."

"Oh! I forgot; of course not; you's too big to have dolls, I s'pose, you poor fing! Well, don't you ever play dat real folks is what dey ain't?"

"Of course not."

"Den I guess you's had a tough time. My fahver says dat folks is nicer for what you fink 'em dan what dey is—most folks."

"Does your father put such ideas into your innocent little head?"

"Of course not," said the child, contemptuously. "He says 'em to gran'ma, sometimes, an' my head

just takes 'em in for itself; dat's how it is. Say, you don't fink folks ain't noffin' but what dey act like, do you? 'Cause my fahver says dat ain't fair; so of course it ain't, 'cause he knows."

Slowly, but surely, the idea took possession of me that this child's father must be either a Solon or a prig. Frank Wayne had once talked to me a great deal of stuff like that which the child had been repeating in a parrot-like manner, and it had annoyed me a great deal, for I really liked him and was trying to love him; but what girl who is trying to persuade herself that she is in love can have any patience with talk that sounds like ethical discussion? It all came back to me, as this mere infant prattled about matters entirely beyond her comprehension, and it forced me, as she talked, into a brown study, from which I was roused by the remark:

"Say! do you know you look just de way I look in a lookin'-glass after I's took some medicine dat I don't like one single bit?"

I made haste to compose my face and profess some interest in the dolls. The change in my manner would have been acceptable to an adult, but Miss Alice Hope was not an adult. As I had learned in the class-room, the one task harder

than to get an idea into a juvenile head is that of getting an idea out. The child returned to the subject by remarking:

"You must have had a dreadful not-comfortable fink in your finker a little while ago. Why didn't you frow it out? I wouldn't carry not-comfortable finks when dere's such a lot of nice ones dat anybody can get if dey want 'em; dat's what my fahver says."

"Your father must be a very lucky man, to be able to have only pleasant thoughts. I wish I knew how he contrived to do it."

"Do you? Well, *I* can tell you, 'cause he told me one day. When any bovvers comes into his mind he just goes to finkin' 'bout *me* right away, an' all de bad finks tumbles out of his mind right off. *You* can do it if you want to; I don't mind havin' two people fink about me. I don't see *why* finkin' 'bout me makes bad finks go 'way; does you?"

"Yes, I do—you little witch," said I, snatching her in my arms and kissing her soundly.

"Don't make me drop Dolly," she screamed. This remark cooled my admiration to such an extent that I dropped the child somewhat hastily. Apparently she did not note my change of feeling,

for as she resumed attentions to her brood she continued:

"Well, if you understand it, I suppose it's all right, dough of course 'twould be anyhow, seein' my fahver says so."

How much more of this nonsense was I doomed to listen to? Not that I disliked it; it was amusing rather than otherwise; it was so unexpected that it might have been far less sensible without offending one who for years had found only stupidity, sullenness, or impudence in children. (There were no children in our family.) But, amusing though it was, it was unfair to the child to encourage it. Evidently little Alice Hope was "running wild"—the pet of an indulgent grandmother and a careless father—a combination that would ruin the mind of the best child alive. She needed the formative and restraining influence of a mother, or, lacking that, kindly but close discipline by a good teacher. Her own dislike of teachers, and her father's contempt for them, proved this.

Then I wished she might be in my school. She would be like a lily among weeds; but how delightful it would be, sometimes, for my weary eyes to rest upon her! How carefully, even from grat-

itude alone, would I endeavor to train the mind of so cheery a being! It could not be: the mere thought of transporting her to the city horrified me; but why should I not endeavor to improve her character somewhat while we were near each other? Of one thing I was certain: however distasteful my professional duties had been, I had acquired and developed a faculty for training immature minds. My progress with any special case had been slow enough to be depressing, but, as I frequently reminded myself, the material was most unpromising. The greatest Teacher who ever spoke had himself admitted that good seed could flourish only on good ground. But if I were to choose my own material upon which to work, what could be more inviting than this child, who had forced herself upon my attention, and at least a little way into my heart, in spite of my effort to exclude her and all of her kind? Perhaps here was to be my compensation for years of labor, which until now had been almost disheartening. Would the results of my training last? Might they not all be undone by her grandmother, who I felt was a horrid old woman, and her father, who seemed to be a crank, or at least a fellow of many affectations? Well, suppose they were?

The risk was no greater than with all my previous infant charges, and from the selfish standpoint alone the work promised to be its own reward.

"Alice," said I.

There was no reply. The child was leaning over one of her dolls, who had been laid at the root of the tree and covered with a handkerchief.

"Alice," I repeated.

The child turned her head, shook it slightly, frowned a little, and put her finger to her lips in a warning way. What utter nonsense! Of one thing I assured myself: I would endeavor to train her imagination and keep it from running riot. A character which began with imagination, I said to myself, would become as ridiculous as a house of which a builder should first elaborate the cornice, while the foundation and frame remained bare and neglected.

"Missis Bond was sayin' her prayers before takin' her afternoon nap," said the child, rising and rejoining me. "It isn't nice to talk while anybody's sayin' deir prayers. Of course you didn't know she was sayin' 'em, else you wouldn't have done it."

"My dear little child," said I, kindly—I was

determined not to repel her by any abruptness of manner or statement—"how did you ever come to imagine that your dolls pray or can pray?"

"Dey ain't dolls; dey's my children," said she, "an' all little children ought to say deir prayers before dey go to sleep, even to take a nap: my fahver says so. He says dere's nobody but de Lord who is sure to know all 'bout what folks need when dey is asleep."

"Your father is quite right," said I; "but he wasn't talking about make-believe people, like your dolls."

This assertion set the child to thinking, at which I was delighted; there is nothing good that may not be hoped for in the pupil who thinks. I did not disturb her. It would be time for me to speak when she reached some conclusion through the exercise of her own reasoning powers. She looked at her dolls, several of whom had already been placed in make-believe beds; then she gravely said:

"If you don't treat make-b'lieve folks de same as you do real folks, what's de good of makin' b'lieve at all?"

"Treat your dolls as dolls—just what they are," said I. "They are only playthings. Other little

girls are satisfied with playthings just as they are; why shouldn't you be like them?"

"I ain't goin' to try to be satisfied wiff old heads, an' arms, an' bodies, an' feet, if I can't make b'lieve dey's people."

"But, dear, you know they're not people, don't you?"

"Yes, but I can forget it as soon as I begins to play wiff 'em. I don't have no good times till I do forget it. De idea of lovin' Missis Bond just de way she is! Why, if I couldn't make b'lieve 'bout her, I'd frow her in de street. Nasty old fing!"

"Alice!"

"Oh, I don't mean you—I mean Missis Bond," said she, going over to the pretended feminine of the pretended prayer. She uncovered the recumbent figure, looked at it steadily, and an expression of disgust began to creep over her face. Suddenly she dropped the extempore spread, threw herself down upon the pine-needles, and burst into tears.

"Alice, my child——"

"*Ain't* your, child. I was goin' to like you, but I won't try any more."

"Dear little girl, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. I am very, very sorry."

"Den," she sobbed, "I suppose I's got to forgive you. My fahver says we must forgive bad folks when dey're sorry. But I don't want to forgive you—not one single bit."

"But what have I done?" I asked. "I like to see little girls enjoy their playthings; no one likes it better."

"You—you just likes to see 'em do it your way—dat's all. You don't like me to enjoy Missis Bond and de rest of de children *my* way, an' you's just 'bout made me hate 'em. Oh, dear, dear!"

A new flood of tears followed. I assured myself that I never before had seen such a silly, unreasonable being; nevertheless I could not help feeling a little guilty. The regard for the wretched dolls as human beings certainly was affected; but just as certainly the child's grief was genuine. What was I to do about it? I could not say I had been in the wrong; neither could I bear to see the little thing so unhappy.

"Alice," said I, lying down beside her, "I am very, very sorry I said anything at all about your dolls, for you are a dear, sweet little thing, and I can't bear to see you unhappy."

She made no reply, so I put my arm around her, and continued:

"Don't you believe me?"

"Yes," she answered, in a somewhat choked voice, "I suppose I's got to." Nevertheless she continued to sob.

"Won't you stop crying, then? It makes me dreadfully unhappy to hear such a dear little girl cry so pitifully."

"Well, you—you made *me* dreadfully unhappy. You don't fink I ought to have all de unhappy an' you not to have any of it, does you, when I didn't do noffin' bad, an' you did?"

"I don't want either of us to be so," said I, "and I wouldn't 'do noffin' bad' to you for anything. I was only trying to teach you something that I thought you ought to know—teach you because I am so fond of you."

"But I don't want you to teach me. I ain't a school, an' I told you I didn't like school-teachers."

"Come, come, dear—school-teachers aren't such dreadful people as you seem to think. A great many of them teach only because they are very sorry for little children who don't know anything, and will have a great deal of trouble in their lives if they don't learn about a great many things. I myself teach a great many children whom I really don't like—real disagreeable little children—

merely because I want them to be spared trouble when they grow older."

The child raised herself on one elbow, turned a tear-stained face toward me, and asked, in the gravest manner imaginable:

"Does you make dem mizzable, like me, by tellin' 'em dat what dey like isn't what dey make b'lieve it is?"

"No, no; such teaching only happens by accident. I won't do it again, I promise you."

"All right, den," said the child, making an effort to compose herself. "I'll let you teach me a little if you want to, but—noffin' 'bout dolls; don't you forget dat. I knows all 'bout dolls dat I wants to, an' I know it just how I wants to; so 'tain't no good to teach me some more 'bout 'em."

I pretended to agree to this, though I mentally reserved the right, and defined to myself the duty, of preventing the child from longer being sacrilegious to the extent of putting prayers into the mouths of her dolls.

Soon confidence was fully restored. I pillowed the child's head in my lap, as we lay there under the pines; I gently wiped the tear-stains from her face, called her attention to a couple of birds chasing each other through the boughs overhead, and

learned from her that an odd mixture of noises which came from an elm-tree a little way off was made by a squirrel and a robin quarrelling about a theft of eggs from the robin's nest.

"Dey's always fightin' dat way; my fahver has made me listen to 'em often, an' told me what 'twas all 'bout. I don't like de squirrels. De idea of de mean fings eatin' de birds' eggs, so no little birds can't ever come out of 'em! An' de squirrels is so pretty, too. But my fahver says you can't ever tell a fief by his looks."

"Your father is a man of sense," said I, after thinking over the child's statement a moment. It was a remarkably good-looking thief—so I had been told, for I never had seen her—who stole Frank Wayne's heart away from me. I had also been told that she was the most innocent-looking little thing in the world, and that she had shed tears copiously when told she had almost broken another woman's heart. She had never known that Frank had cared for any other woman, she said. There were men enough hanging about any pretty girl, so who could suspect her of "catching" another girl's beau? I suppose the merry, chattering, innocent-looking squirrel would in like manner protest that he didn't know the eggs be-

longed to the robin; he knew only that they were eggs, and just such eggs as he was sure he liked better than any other. Frank's wife had also said that she first came to like him because he looked so lonesome as well as handsome—looked just as if he were longing for a woman's love. The squirrel probably would say he felt obliged to swallow the eggs—they looked exactly as if they were longing to be eaten. How, I wondered, did that match ever turn out? Fortunately for my peace of mind, they had left the city, or rather, never came to it, after their marriage; for the girl, who was visiting friends when Frank met her, was from the country, and when married Frank took her to her old home. If he were happy I was glad for his sake; but if the girl were the mere pretty doll that had been described to me—if——

"Sometimes you don't talk very much, do you?" said the child. I did not enjoy the interruption, for I was human enough to hug my sorrows closely and make the most of them. I made haste to reply:

"I'm afraid I wasn't being good company just then, and——How time has flown! That can't be a supper-bell that I hear ringing?"

"No," said the child with a sigh; "dat's

gran'ma ringin' for me to come home an' take my nap. I's got to wake all my children now, too; dat's just a burnin' shame. Good-by. I'll let you teach me somefin' to-morrow, I guess—but noffin' 'bout dolls, remember."

"I'll remember, dear."

"Upon your word an' honor?"

"Upon my word and honor."

SECOND DAY.

THE TEACHER IS TAUGHT.

It was with some trepidation, and not a little sense of hypocrisy and guilt, that I approached my hammock the day that little Alice had kindly consented to let me teach her a little, "but noffin' 'bout dolls, remember." My landladies—as quaint a couple of old persons as I could have imagined, but nevertheless true women—appeared to fear I would become lonesome for lack of society, and perhaps abruptly leave them; so they were so attentive that it was almost impossible to escape from them without seeming rude. Their conversation was well worth listening to, if only for curiosity's sake; for, although they were poor—the last remains of a family which once had been influential—they were living storehouses of about a century of country wit and wisdom, and could express opinions brightly on any subject. They knew everybody in the vicinity—everybody who ever had amounted to anything in business, politics or the professions—and their inoffensive gossip

was so quaint as to make me long to write a "History of a Rediscovered County."

I would call them ladies, had they not been possessed by the one demon of savagery which seems hardest to exorcise for some natures otherwise inoffensive and considerate—a persistent impulse to manage the affairs of other people. Evidently they thought me a brute for having sought a summer resting-place where there were no children; for, no matter what the subject of conversation at the table, those well-meaning old women would deftly pass it to and fro between them until by some imperceptible process it got back to children, and how good some children were—or would be, and how bright others could be—bright beyond the expectation of those who best knew them. This manifest effort to change my opinion began before I had taken a meal in the house.

"You don't like children; leastways, so I've been led to suppose," said Mistress Drusilla, as her sister always called her.

"Not when I am resting," I replied. "At home I am obliged to endure forty or fifty of them through five days of every seven, and I think I've earned a respite."

"Most children *are* pests," said Miss Dorcas—her sister always addressed her by this name and title, except when they were alone together—"but it takes exceptions to prove the rule; for I know a young one in this neighborhood whose manners, I must say, wouldn't be thought out of the way in some grown folks who are considered quite proper."

"She's quite a little lady, Alice is," said Mistress Drusilla.

"Indeed she is," said Miss Dorcas. "She's original sometimes, and that makes some people think her queer; but, sakes alive, original folks are so scarce in this world that they sometimes puzzle the very elect."

"And Alice is *so* original," remarked Mistress Drusilla.

Evidently my hostesses were alluding to my new acquaintance, and were desirous of changing my opinion of children by bringing us together. I would not have objected, had not their managing mania been so apparent. As it was, I determined to combat their purpose, even if it were necessary for me to find new lodgings. I had seen managing old women before.

"Alice comes of real good stock, too," continued Mistress Drusilla "Her mother was a——"

"Spare me, Mistress Drusilla, please," said I, with a laugh intended to be conciliatory, "but I'm determined to be interested in no more children, and if you talk further I'm sure you'll shake my resolution. Tell me, instead, about grown people; you seem to know a great many who are more interesting than our humdrum city people."

"Just as you say, my dear," said Mistress Drusilla, after an odd interchange of glances between the sisters; "but I think—do have another cup of coffee—no?—I think you might be brought to change your mind about children, to your own great comfort, if you were to get acquainted with our little pet."

"That is why I don't want to extend my circle of juvenile acquaintance," I replied. "Children are wearing—even the best of them. They've worn me out. That is why I'm trying to escape them for the present."

"Maybe you'll wish you'd changed your mind when, one of these days, you have some of your own climbing all about you, and you find yourself lonesome when they're not doing it."

"No danger," I retorted. "I'm an old maid, and shall always remain one."

"So I said once, my dear," said the old woman;

"but I changed my mind and married, and if ever angels took human shape it was while my two little girls were alive. They were too angelic—that was the trouble. The Lord himself couldn't get along without them, so back they went to heaven. Their father followed after; and I would have gone, too, if it hadn't seemed heartless to leave Miss Dorcas all alone."

Then Mistress Drusilla began to tremble and weep a little in the quiet restrained way which appears to be a peculiarity of country-people, and Miss Dorcas with similar restraint of manner tried to console her sister. The occasion seemed a fitting one for my escape, though I first expressed sympathy with all the tenderness that was in me. Nevertheless, as I sauntered toward the little pine grove in which my hammock swung I had to admit to myself that if my Alice were the Alice of my hostesses the fact of our chance acquaintanceship must soon become known in one way or other, so it would be advisable for me to be the first to mention it.

I found little Alice awaiting me; at least, as I passed through the pines I saw her figure motionless against the sky. She stood on the brow of the slope that fell away from the trees, and was look-

ing out to sea. I approached her softly to see what it might be that was attracting her attention, but there was nothing unusual in sight. The beach, nearly a mile away, was bare, and the only vessels visible were too far away to hold one's attention. Yet she remained motionless, even when I was near enough for her to hear my foot-falls. Finally I stood beside her, laid a hand on her shoulder, and asked:

"What are you looking at so earnestly, dear?"

"Oh, noffin'," she replied, looking up as carelessly as if we had already met that morning.

"I had no idea that 'noffin'' would be so very interesting."

"Didn't you?" she asked, still looking seaward. "Well, just you try it. Look 'way off dat way a long time, wivout stoppin', an' you'll fink dat you can't stop if you want to. Now begin. I'll help you."

Is anything more uninteresting than a flat limitless expanse of water, with nothing to break the distance? I thought not, as I began, half in fun, a far-away stare, according to request. Soon, however, the view became interesting, then fascinating, then absorbing. A few minutes later, although I became conscious that little Alice had

changed her position and was standing in front of me and looking up into my face, it required severe effort to withdraw my gaze. When finally I succeeded, the child clapped her hands, and her eyes danced, and her cheeks glowed, and her lips parted as roguishly as if she never had been absorbed in anything in her life, and she shouted:

"I told you so! Didn't I tell you so? Say! do you know you looked ever so much like a picture my fahver's got—a lovely picture of a lady, named—dear me! what *is* dat lady's name? I can always fink of it when I don't need to. Let me see; it's—it's—Meddy—Meddy—— Oh, pshaw!"

I tried to recall some feminine names beginning with "Meddy," but failed. Medusa was the only one that seemed to bear a resemblance in sound, and I declined positively to admit for an instant that I could resemble that fateful creature. Could it be that the breeze-shaken crimps of my hair—which I am proud to say was dark, heavy, and abundant—resembled serpents? But could any child imagine a picture of Medusa "lovely?"

"I'm afraid I can't help you recall the name," said I. "There are so few names beginning with M-e-d."

"Meddy—Meddy—Meddy," the child continued to whisper; then suddenly she exclaimed aloud:

"Oh!—Meddy Tation!—dat's de name of de lady in de picture. An' you looked just like her."

"That's a very pretty compliment, dear; but 'Meditation' isn't a name."

"'Tis, too," said the child, with a valiant, defiant air, as if she felt called upon to fight for something; "it's the name of my fahver's picture."

"Ah, yes; I understand; but it isn't a person's name: it means the state of mind of the lady in the picture. Meditation means the act of thinking long about something—perhaps something about which one is not entirely sure."

"Well, well!" drawled little Alice; "dat's news to me. It 'splains somefin', dough, 'cause once I asked fahver whever de lady in de picture was not finkin' very hard about somefin', an' he said 'yes;' an' I asked him what it was, an' he smoked a lot of smoke out of his cigar first, an' looked at de picture a long time, an' den he said: 'I 'spect she's finkin' whever she ought to say "yes" or "no."'"

Just like a man! All men are alike. Frank Wayne was just that way; if he weren't I might have been a happy woman and wife. And here

was another man who evidently regarded womanly deliberation in thought with the same impatience and contempt. Is it inexorable fate that man must ever be too dull of comprehension to understand woman? And must the wretch forever imagine that when woman meditates he is her whole object of thought?

"You don't look much like Meddy Tation now," remarked little Alice suddenly, while I was still full of indignant musings. "You look more like Miss Judiff in de big picture Bible. She's holdin' up a man's head dat she cutted off, an' lookin' like as if she'd like to cut it off again."

"Thank you," said I, hastening to bring my features under control. "What were we talking about? Oh!—what did you see, Alice, while you looked so long at the ocean?"

"Oh, noffin' but water; noffin' else at all; but it didn't ever stay de same shape and color. Soon as I found somefin' I wanted to keep lookin' at, it went and looked some uvver way, an' when I wanted some of it to stay de uvver way it went and done somefin' else. What did *you* see, when you was lookin' like my fahver's picture?"

"About the same that you did, dear, though I don't believe I could explain it so well."

"My fahver comes out to look at de water sometimes wiff me, when he's home," said the child, "and he sees it just de way I do. He says dat's what makes it so interestin'—'cause it's always doin' somefi'n' new. He says it's just de same way wiff folks: de ones dat's most changeable gets de most 'tention, even if dey's as weak as water."

"Quite true," I murmured. Alice's father knew something, it was quite evident, although his knowledge lacked comprehension of woman. I was willing even to admit that he might have acquired his simile of waves and human inconstancy by observation of women—some women. Had not the butterfly girls of my acquaintance always been surrounded by hosts of admirers, while women of great heart and soul were attractive only to one another and an occasional widower of discernment—and extreme age?

"Let us leave the waves to themselves, dear," said I, "and think of something else. What were we going to do to-day?"

"Why, you was goin' to teach me somefin'—a little somefin'—but not 'bout dolls: you 'member dat part of it? An' I'll tell you de first fing you can teach me, if you want to, 'cause I want to know. You can teach me what your name is;

else what's I to call you, 'xcept 'Say'? You don't like to be called 'Say,' do you?"

"I have heard prettier names," I replied. "As for me—I have it!—you may call me 'Teacher.' You say you don't like teachers. Now, I want to be so good and pleasant to you that you'll think more pleasantly of all teachers hereafter. Just call me 'Teacher;' I'll give you the rest of my name afterward."

"Well, if you's goin' to make me like 'em, you's got to be awful nice—just *awful* nice—and you's got to teach me noffin' 'bout dolls—not one fing; 'member dat."

"I shall remember it, dear. Now listen to me. Far away from here, in New York, where I live, there are thousands upon thousands of little girls about as old as you who don't know anything good unless they learn it at school. Their parents are very poor, and while the children are at school the father is at work somewhere, and the mother somewhere else, for money enough to keep the roof over their heads and get food for their children to eat."

"Don't de children have any gran'mas to do anyfin' for 'em?"

"H'm—not often, if I remember rightly; and

when the fathers and mothers reach home again about supper-time they are so tired that they haven't much time or sense to teach their children anything."

"Dey can teach 'em cat's-cradle, an' rabbit-on-de-wall, an' who's got de button, can't dey?"

"I suppose so; but——"

"Den what makes you say dey can't teach 'em noffin'? I fink dat's a good deal."

"True, but it isn't enough. They need to know how to get along in the world should their parents be taken away; for sometimes one of these children loses a father or mother."

"Jus' like me," said the child, as cheerfully as if the loss of a mother were one of the every-day occurrences which one must bear philosophically. "I lost my muvver, you know."

"To be sure; but you had a good father left, I trust, and you have a grandmother to look after you. But some of these little ones' fathers are not good; they are rude, stupid, ignorant fellows, who think more of themselves than they do of their children, and——"

"Really?"

"Really."

"Well, I don't understan' dat at all," said the

child, going quickly into a brown study—a very brown study—out of which she presently emerged to remark: "I s'pose dat's what my fahver means when he says folks in New York ain't like folks anywhere else, 'cause dey don't seem to have any hearts. Don't you fink dat's what he means?"

"Quite likely. Some of the fathers and mothers of children in New York are so bad that they get drunk, and spend money for liquor that might buy comforts for their children, and——"

"I know 'bout dat kind," the child interrupted. "Dere's one of 'em lives next house but one to us. He's awful rich, an' got a great big house wiff a lovely garden, an' his wife's a real sweet lady, but his children don't ever seem glad when dey see deir fahver comin' home, 'cause he looks an' acts as if he didn't know 'em. One of his little girls tole me one day she wished de Lord had give her my fahver instead of hers. I tole her *I* didn't, 'cause den de Lord might have give me her fahver instead of mine, an' dat would be awful. Den she cried."

"Wasn't that dreadful? Well, these little children of whom I am telling you haven't rich fathers and handsome houses and pretty gardens. Their entire family have only two or three rooms

to live in, and often the parents lock the doors when they leave home, so their few things can't be stolen; so when the children return from school they have only the street and gutter to play in."

"*Dat's* lovely, anyhow."

"Oh, Alice!"

"Yes, 'tis. I just love to go 'long de street an' pick daisies an' dandelions, an' see if dere ain't some wild strawberries, or if de green blackberries ain't beginnin' to turn red or black, an' if dere ain't a turtle behind a big stone somewhere, or a nest of little birdies dat ain't got all deir fevvers yet. Just tell you what, dem children don't have bad times like you fink dey do. An' if dey don't have no gran'mas, why, den who's to call 'em in de house to take naps, I'd like to know? I fink gran'-mas is awful nice, but I don't like naps one single bit."

"But, Alice, dear, streets in the city aren't like roads in the country. There are no daisies or dandelions or birds' nests; there are only walls and stone pavements, stone sidewalks, dirt, mud, and people. There are no pleasant places in which to play, nor anything to play with."

"Why, you just said dere was mud."

"But mud isn't nice to play with."

"Oh, yes, it is. I didn't mean to conterdic', 'cause gran'ma says it isn't polite; but it *is* nice to play wiff mud—really an' truly."

The horrid child! How easy it is to be deceived by appearances! There was nothing about Alice Hope's manner that would have led any one to imagine her in sympathy with any city people in any way. Nevertheless, it would not do to again make her suspicious of me, so I hastily said:

"Mud such as you see—mere wet clay—isn't at all like the dreadful stuff in city gutters, where the wretched children of the very poor wade to and fro and sail make-believe boats made of—"

"Wade? Sail boats?" exclaimed the child, with a sigh. "Oh, just don't I wish I was one of dose dreadful poor children! See dat big ocean out dere? See what lots and lots of water dere is? Well, you can't go wadin' in it at all 'xcept once in a very long time, when de wind an' tide is what my fahver calls 'just so.' Sure's you try it any uvver time a great big wave comes up an' knocks you down an' splashes you all over. An' boats? Why, if you try to sail one it just gets rolled over an' over an' comes right back to where it started from.

Dear, dear! *don't* I just wish I was one of dose poor children!"

"Well, dear, you wouldn't if you could see them. As I was saying, their parents teach them almost nothing; but there are hundreds of big schools, where the poor little things are taught a great deal, and learn to become wiser and better than their parents."

"Den," remarked Miss Alice, with much positiveness, "I'm glad I'm not one of 'em. I don't want to be any smarter an' better dan my fahver and gran'ma. It makes my head just ache sometimes to fink how smart an' good dey is, an' I's sure my head would split right open if I had a muvver, too, dat was just as smart an' good, an' I had to fink 'bout her, too. Of course my muvver *is*, 'cause ev'rybody up in heaven is everyfin' dey ought to be; but you don't have to fink dat way 'bout 'em, 'cause you don't see 'em an' hear 'em so much."

"So much? You don't see them and hear them at all, dear."

"Humph!" said the child, contemptuously. "I guess *your* muvver ain't dead, is she?"

"No, dear."

"Might know it; else you wouldn't talk dat

way. Why, I can see my muvver whenever I fink 'bout her a little while; I can hear her talk, too. She looks just like she always did, an' talks just de same way she did when I was a baby. Just holds me ever so tight to her, an' looks at me ever so long, wiff de cunnin'est kind of a little laugh in her face, an' says, 'Muvver's little darlin'! Muvver's little darlin'!' an' it's just lovely."

"So I should imagine, dear," said I, gently, putting my arm around the child; "but you know you don't really see and hear her; you only imagine it."

"Don't you say dat again!" exclaimed the child, twitching away from my embrace and climbing from the hammock to the ground, where she stood and looked at me defiantly. "Guess I know more 'bout my muvver dan you does."

"Certainly you do, dear," said I, quickly.

"You never saw her, an' I did. I know all 'bout her."

"I should think you would, and I am ever so glad that you do. It ought to make you very happy, too; but I merely want to teach you to understand it rightly, so that you won't ever be disappointed."

I supposed this would appease her and restore

confidence; but it didn't. She continued to stand aloof and look at me angrily, as if I had done her serious injury. Finally she said:

"Just what I was 'fraid 'bout. You's gone an' wanted to teach me somefin' I didn't want to know, an' made me unhappy. Is dat de kind of fings you teach de children in your school?"

"No, dear; I teach them about the world, and the stars, and the ocean, and about the people who live in other countries——"

"In de moon, an' all dem places?"

"No, dear; there are no people in the moon, that we know of."

"But we can make b'lieve, can't we? 'Cause it's so much nicer to fink when you look up at a big round moon—not one of dem little ones dat look like a piece of watermelon wiff all de red part cut out—it's so much nicer when you look up at de moon to fink dat dere's people in it lookin' down an' seein' de world goin' sailin' along in de sky, just like anuvver moon. You know de moon's noffin' but a star—don't you?—only it's nearer, so it looks bigger, an' de world's noffin' but anuvver star—don't you?"

"Yes," said I; "but when and where did you study astronomy?"

"Gracious! what a big word!" exclaimed the child. "I didn't ever study anyfin' as big as dat, I'm sure."

"Astronomy is the study of the stars," said I. "Where did you——"

"Oh, is dat all it means? Oh, yes, 'stron'my. Well, I's been learnin' 'bout 'em ever since I was a dear, tiny little fing, not much bigger dan one of my dolls, I guess. My fahver told me 'bout 'em, an' gran'ma tole me some more. Say! do you know where de big dipper is?"

"No, dear. Are you thirsty?"

The child broke into a merry peal of laughter, and looked quizzically at me. "Of course not," she replied, and then, after another laugh, said: "If I was firsty, I wouldn't try to drink out of *dat*. It's too big, an' it's millions an' millions of miles away from here. Besides, most of de time it's turned up endways, or upside down, or somefin', so it would spill all de water out anyway. I mean de big dipper up in de sky—de seven big stars dat's on de backwards end of de big bear dat's goin' roun' an' roun' de norf star all de time, like as if it wanted to bite it an' was 'fraid to."

Slowly I realized that the child was alluding to the constellation of the Great Bear, and that I had

heard sometime, somewhere, that a portion of it was vulgarly called "the Dipper." I had seldom seen any stars but those which were directly overhead. Houses in our portion of the city were too high to permit an extended view of the sky, and the air, at the level of the sidewalk, was at night so full of artificial light as to make any view of the heavenly bodies unsatisfactory.

"Now I understand you," I said. "Do you know any of the other stars?"

"Lots of 'em—lots and piles. I know Jupiter, an' Mars, an' Venus, an' Satin——"

"Saturn, dear," said I, pronouncing the name of the ringed planet with distinctness.

"Say!" exclaimed the child, as if she were about to impart something in extreme confidence, "if you teach me to say it dat way my fahver won't let you play wiff me any more. One of our visitors once tried to teach me to say Satur-rn, as you call it, an' my fahver said if he didn't stop he wouldn't give him noffin' but bad cigars to smoke for a week."

"Very well," said I, with a sigh. "I'll try to avoid such dreadful punishment. Do you know any other stars?"

"Goodness, yes. Dere's de man wiff a sword—

dat man wiff de Irish name, dat I always keep forgettin'—O' somefin'."

"Orion?"

"Dat's it! Den dere's de Greek woman's chair——"

"The chair of Andromeda?"

"Yes. Why, you do know somefin' 'bout de stars, don't you? But I don't see why you didn't know 'bout be big dipper, when it's de biggest bunch of stars in de sky. Let's see: den dere's de seven stars, an' de five stars."

"What are they?"

"Why, stars, of course—seven of 'em in one place an' five in anuvver. Don't you know 'em?"

"I fear I don't."

"Dat's too bad! 'cause dey's awful cunnin' little bunches. Tell you what: you come over to our house to-night, an' I'll show 'em to you."

"I don't like to be out in the night air, dear," said I. Fondness for this child was not going to draw me into country manners, the accepting of formal invitations, and the acquiring of a lot of country acquaintances.

"Night air in de country is better dan day air in de city—dat's what my fahver says. But I guess I can show you how dey look." The child

went out from the shade of the pines, stooped to the ground a moment or two, and returned with both her chubby hands full of small stones. Then she stooped again and carefully arranged the stones on the ground, five in the form of a V lying on its side, and seven in about the lines of a hand-basin. Then she arose, contemplated her work, and explained:

"Dere's de five stars, an' dere's de seven stars, just de way dey look in de sky."

"Ah, I see; the Hyades and the Pleiades."

"De wha-a-at?"

"The Hyades and the Pleiades; those are the names of the constellations you have pictured, and very correctly, too. If you call them by their right names, no one who has studied astronomy can ever misunderstand you when you speak of them."

The child looked thoughtful, so I hoped the spirit of my injunction was taking effect. But it wasn't; for presently she remarked:

"Well, I know a little 'bout Pleiades, but if I was to talk 'bout dose stars, an' give 'em such awful Dutchy names, nobody dat I know would know what I was talkin' 'bout."

"Why do you think the names Dutchy, dear?"

"'Cause dey don't remind you of anyfin' you know; dat's de was Dutchman's talk is. Dere's lots of Dutchmen 'bout here. But anybody's smart enough to know what seven stars and five stars means."

I hastily abandoned an intention to explain to the child the value of the Greek language as an international basis of scientific nomenclature, for I feared my command of English would not be sufficient. I merely told her that stars and many other natural objects had names in Greek or Latin, because the meanings of words in these languages were known among educated people of all countries.

"Oh, yes, I know 'bout dat," the child replied. "'Cause I learned a lot of 'em last winter. Dere was a big girl—one of de neighbors' children—dat wanted to teach school roun' here, an' gran'ma let me go a little while. What words do you fink she taught me?—all 'bout fings dat was in me? Why, 'trachea,' an' 'sophagus,' an' 'biceps,' an' 'triceps,' an' 'phalanges,' an' 'medulla oblongata,' an' 'ab-*do*-men!' I asked my fahver if it wasn't dreadful for a little girl to have all dem fings in side of her, an' he made a face as if he was takin' medicine, an' said he'd ravver I'd have de measles.

I didn't go to dat school no more. So you'd better be careful 'bout teachin' me big words, if you want to go on teachin' me anyfin'."

I resolved to take this hint to heart. At the same time I began to wonder whether there was anything that I really could teach this child, who had taken possession of my pity because of her ignorance, yet who seemed to know more than any child in my classes or in my circle of acquaintances. Still, was it any more sensible that she should have been taught astronomy instead of physiology?

"How did you come to learn so much about the stars, dear?" I asked. "Most girls are two or three times as old as you before they are taught anything about astronomy."

"Can't help learnin' 'bout 'em," she replied. "Dey're always where dey're lookin' right at me, after dark; dey keeps winkin' at me froo my window almost every night till I go to sleep; an', besides, we don't see noffin' else from our piazza, dese warm nights, 'xcept de stars an' de ocean, so I can't help finkin' 'bout 'em an' askin' questions 'bout 'em. My fahver says if a person don't want to grow up wivout knowin' noffin' dey'd better ask questions 'bout what dey

see oftenest an' fink 'bout most. So when I sits on de piazza nights, in papa's lap—when he's home—I ask him lots of fings 'bout de stars, an' he tells me 'em, an' when he ain't home gran'ma tells me 'em. She's got a great big map of de sky, wiff de names of all de stars—bunches an' big stars. Sometimes, rainy days I plays stars on de floor. I's got lots of little white stones for stars, but de Milky Way bovvered me awful, 'cause its stars are so little an' close togevver, you know. So one day I got some flour out of de kitchen, an' den I got it all right. It looked just like de sky, 'cause de rug was blue. Gran'ma got real cross 'bout it when she came to clean de room, 'cause de flour wouldn't come out of de rug; but when she told my fahver he only laughed. Den he got a piece of chalk an' let me make de big stars wiff dat instead of stones, an' den—what do you fink? Why, he bought a new rug, an' hung de old one, wiff all de stars on it, on de wall of his room, an' he shows it to all his friends dat comes to see him."

I turned my face so as to laugh unseen. This child's father was evidently a ridiculous fellow, in spite of the occasional shrewd remarks which his daughter had repeated; but the incident of the rug certainly was funny. I found myself sympa-

thizing with the grandmother, too, horrid old woman though I believed her, for what woman can contemplate unmoved the ruin of a rug? Nevertheless, had the rug been my own, and a child—this particular child—had laboriously mapped the heavens upon it, with so faithful a sense of proportion regarding the Milky Way, I was not certain that I would not have decorated my own wall with it.

But, after all, what was the incident but another illustration of imagination running riot? Of what possible use was her knowledge of the stars? Parallax, ascension, declination, occultation, all the laws that governed the movements of the heavenly bodies, that raised mere star-gazing to the rank of a science, had undoubtedly been neglected by the father in his pretended teaching; the mere words probably made their meanings distasteful to the literal-minded fellow. I could at least put a thought or two into the bright little head, as seed into good ground, to help the child toward more lasting comprehension of the system and law that governed the movements of the heavenly bodies; so I said:

"Well, dear, have you learned or thought anything about the stars except what you have told

me? The stars are very pretty to look at and to give you a new way of amusing yourself; but they weren t put there for that purpose alone. They must be of some use, in some way beside merely amusing people: don't you think so?"

"Yes, indeed I do," she replied, with great earnestness. "My fahver tole me all 'bout it one time, an' I haven't ever forgot it, eiver."

So the father didn't make a mere plaything of his child, after all! I was glad of it. I was becoming painfully solicitous about the future welfare of this child. I had so long carried in my heart a sense of responsibility for the wretched children in my school—sheep with no shepherd but me—that I could not feel otherwise regarding any child with whom I came in contact. But how had her father brought practical astronomy within the comprehension of so small a head? I asked her to tell me all about it, as her father had explained it to her.

"Well," said she, "once dere lived 'way 'cross de ocean a farmer named Job, an' he was de richest farmer in all de country round. It never troubled him if the butcher's wagon didn't come round in time, 'cause he had just fousands of sheep, an' would go out an' kill one in time to have meat

for dinner; an' gran'ma says when folks was offered spring lamb at his house dey *got* spring lamb. He had five hundred pairs of oxen—jus' fink of it! enough to plough all de farms as far as you can look from our biggest hill, gran'ma says. He had such lots of camels dat if dey was all in a menagerie no little girl would have to be lifted up to see one; dere were such lots of 'em dat each little girl could have a whole one for herself to look at, all by herself, an' nobody to stand in front of her. An' donkeys—why, if a whole Sunday-school picnic had gone to his farm each boy and girl could have had a donkey to ride all day, instead of takin' turns of just a minute or two, like dey had to at our last picnic.

"But he deserved such lots of fings, 'cause he was a real good man. Why, when his children done anyfin' wrong he tried to be punished for it himself, 'stead of makin' dem have bad times; dough I 'spec' it hurt 'em just as bad, and maybe a little worse.

"Well, one day de Ole Bad Man come along, an' tole de Lord he didn't fink 'twas hard for Job to be good, 'cause he didn't have no trouble to make him want to be bad. An' de Lord tole de Ole Bad Man to give Job some trouble, an' he'd

see dat it didn't make no difference. So one day de Old Bad Man sent some fighters to kill Job's farm-hands, an' some fieves to steal de oxen an' donkeys, an' some lightnin' to kill de sheep, an' some more fieves to steal de camels, an' den he sent a big storm dat knocked down a house where all Job's children was eatin' dinner, an' it killed all de boys—didn't kill de little girls, dough; my fahver says dat would have been too much.

"Well, Job was real good 'bout it. He said de Lord gave him everyfin' he had, an' if He wanted to take it all away again, why, who could prevent Him? So de Ole Bad Man felt pretty sheepish; an' he said dat if he could only hurt Job himself, den fings would be diff'rent. Den de Lord said, 'Well, go hurt him, just so you don't kill him; den you'll see you don't know as much as you fink you do.' So de Ole Bad Man give Job boils—did you ever have boils?"

"No," said I, with some asperity.

"Neiver did I; but gran'ma says dey's dreadful sores dat itches like de heat-rash—didn't you ever have heat-rash?"

"I——Go on, dear."

"Well, dey hurt him so—just like a whole lot of big skeeter-bites, all at a time—dat he couldn't

scratch himself fast enough wiff his hands, so he done it wiff a piece of broken dish. But he didn't get bad, dough his own wife told him to call de Lord bad names an' die. Gran'ma says she guesses de ole lady got tired of havin' a husband roun' dat was sick an' poor too. Job behaved himself real well till free friends of his came a-visitin'; dey talked to him for a whole lot of days togevver, an' tole him what he ought to do, an' oughtn't to do, an' what dey would do if dey was him. Den he lost his patience, an' began to say lots of cross fings, an' talk as if de Lord didn't have anyfin' to do but look after him, an' how if he'd made de world he'd have had fings diff'rent in a good many ways. My fahver says a man never knows ev'ryfin' so much as when fings ain't goin' to suit him."

"All this is very interesting, dear, though I think I've heard something of the kind before. But what has it to do with the stars? I don't want to lose the story; but try and remember that you were going to tell me how you had learned all about the stars."

"I haven't forgot: I'll reach dem stars pretty soon. Well, one day while Job was a-grumblin' away, de Lord came along in a whirlwind. My

fahver says de Lord really was wiff Job all de time, but when folks gets into trouble dey fink dere's nobody near 'em but de Old Bad Man, so it takes a storm, or a club, or somefin' awful big and strong, to bring 'em to deir senses. Den de Lord give Job a good talkin'-to. He just let him know dat Job nor no uvver man knew just how everyfin' in de world ought to be, an' no man could be as smart as de Lord. He tole him just lots of fings where Job wasn't as smart and strong as de Lord, an' one of de fings he said was, 'Canst dou bind de sweet'—say! what's dat name you calls de seven stars?"

"Pleiades?"

"Oh, yes; my fahver gave me a new doll if I'd learn dat verse to 'member it always; but I always forgets dat word. 'Canst dou bind de sweet influences of de Pleiades, or loose de bands of Orion?' Just fink how little dat must have made Job feel, an' how strong it made him fink de Lord! He couldn't help finkin' 'bout it, you know, 'cause stars was all Job had ever had to look at in de night-time. My fahver says what de Lord told Job in dat verse was de first lesson in de world in practical 'stron'my—'stron'my is all 'bout de stars, you know—an' he says I must

'member it all my life, so if ever I get to havin' bad times an' fink de Lord isn't strong enough to make fings right, I can just go out an' look at de stars awhile an' get my mind right again."

A thunder-storm put an end to our interview, soon after little Alice ended her story, and I was not entirely sorry, for I became so absorbed in my own thoughts that I could not be good company for my little visitor. When at night the clouds disappeared, I sat in my window for hours, looking into the sky, and looking backward into my own life. For my one great sorrow I was conscious I had blamed Heaven quite as much as Frank Wayne; but could I "bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion"?

How glad I was, when I retired, that no one could see my face as I suddenly realized how I had with much condescension begun the day in an attempt to teach the child, and how the teacher herself had been taught!

THIRD DAY.

WET-WEATHER WISDOM.

The third day of my visit to the country was such as people starting for a vacation seldom count upon. There was rain: not a mere shower, to make earth and sky brighter; but an alternation of mist and rain, rain and mist, that compelled me to remain indoors. Even a walk on the broad piazza was uncomfortable, so penetrating was the dampness. I tried to ignore the weather and lose msyelf in a book, but the weather declined to be ignored; it made its depressing influence known, in ways which weather well understands, and I finally found myself compelled to stop reading and study the pictures on the wall of the parlor. They were about as dreadful as the day: so the weather, my surroundings, and my spirits were soon in close accord.

My hostesses were quite sorry for me. Besides, they had in other years lost summer boarders through bad weather, and as I was their only

guest thus far, of the season, they desired to retain me. One or the other contrived to be with me and endeavored to entertain me. Mistress Drusilla showed me all the family pictures, about half of them being faded photographs, and the remainder daguerrotypes taken in the good old times when a sitter was expected to maintain an unchanged countenance for a quarter of an hour. Then Miss Dorcas brought down the "samplers" which had been worked by several generations of her feminine ancestors. Some were alphabets worked in stitches that made the letters resemble tea-chest characters; others gave visible form to passages of Scripture; while one, which Miss Dorcas regarded as a masterpiece, was a genealogical tree of which each branch had its own distinctive color—and all the colors had faded.

Then each sister told me stories about some of the neighbors' families, to the third and fourth generations; but they had told similar stories during several hours of each of the preceding days, and there are limits even to country gossip. Finally the old women seemed to feel doleful themselves, and Mistress Drusilla said:

"If it weren't for fear of disturbing you, my dear, we should borrow little Alice, our special

pet, for an hour or two, on days like this. She always wakes us up when things are forlorn like."

"Don't let yourselves suffer on my account, I beg," said I, languidly. "Little Alice, you said: I wonder if that is the child who has strayed up once or twice to the pines where I had my hammock?"

"The very same," said Miss Dorcas, eagerly. "I am sure it must be, for yesterday I saw the flutter of her dress through the trees, I'm sure."

"A child who owns a number of dolls with extraordinary names?" I continued.

"That's our Alice!" exclaimed Mistress Drusilla. "I hope she didn't trouble you much? We haven't let her come to the house since you've been here, for fear of worrying you; but, my dear, we can't watch her closely enough to keep her entirely off the grounds."

"She's not at all offensive," said I. "Indeed, she is quite amusing in some ways. I'm not a child-hater, I beg you to understand: I'm merely endeavoring, for the present, to be spared the wearing influence of children."

"Then you wouldn't be annoyed if we were to have her here a little while this morning?" asked Miss Dorcas. "We were planning to take turns

in going over to see her and her grandmother this morning, but the air is *so* savage to old bones. And we could get the grocer, when he comes, to bring Alice over in his wagon. We'll keep her in the kitchen with us; and she isn't a noisy child, so she wouldn't disturb you if you were in the parlor here or your room."

"Have her wherever you like, or wherever she likes most to be," said I. "I assure you she won't trouble me in the least. I am quite willing to take an interest in this particular child, just to prove to you that I'm not a follower of wicked old King Herod. But no other children, please, nor any more of Alice's family, for me."

"You are very good, my dear," said Mistress Drusilla, looking positively radiant. "Miss Dorcas, you keep a sharp watch for the grocer, won't you, while I write the child's grandma a note."

"I'll be sure to catch him," said Miss Dorcas, who in an instant was in the hall, and arraying herself in rubber shoes and waterproof cloak, while I felt my cheeks blushing with pride—and shame—at my success in securing an enlivening influence for the day, and the deceitful spirit I had manifested. Miss Dorcas hurried to the road, almost a quarter of a mile from the house, and came

back in half an hour, looking like a person who had been under Niagara, but saying, with a cheery chirp in her voice:

"He'll get her."

I wandered to my room, and resumed the oft-broken thread of the novel which I had begun to read days before. I read long enough to become deeply interested, but suddenly I was recalled to a sense of things about me by a series of slams of the outer door, a succession of audible kisses, and then a loud shout—

"Dere's dem banisters! Dey must have been awful lonesome for free or four days wiff nobody to slide down 'em. Now for it! Hooray!"

I dropped my book, went to the door, stopped, recovered myself, and returned to my book. It never would do to have those old women see me greet the child effusively, as I was inclined to do. Within an hour, in spite of the rain, they would have told all their neighbors, with "corroborative detail, intended to give artistic verisimilitude to a bald and unconvincing narrative," as the Mikado says in Gilbert's Japanese play, of how their child-hating boarder had changed her nature within three days. When, finally, I appeared at the head of the stairs, I was as dignified and non-

committal as if I were at the desk of my school-room in the city.

"Hello!" shouted little Alice, as she almost made my heart stop beating by the speed with which she slid down the stair-rail, while Mistress Drusilla and her sister looked on admiringly from below. "Just ain't dis fun! Goodness! Gracious!"

"Alice, dear," I whispered, as she hurried up the stairs and again bestrode the rail, "do be careful. I'm afraid you'll lose your hold and fall—perhaps kill yourself."

"Nonsense!" she shouted. "I ain't de kind dat kills as easy as dat. Here I go!—one—two—free!" And before I could remonstrate further she was again on the floor at the foot of the stairs, and the two old women were all smiles, as if the child were their own and her rude exploit were a lesson well learned.

"Bet *you* can't do it," said the child, as she again hurried to the head of the stairs. "Don't you ever teach your school-children dat? Dey'd like you ever so much if you would."

I did not doubt it, though I did not say so. The child continued:

"Best way to teach 'em is to learn how yourse'f.

My fahver says dat's de only way to teach anybody anyfin'."

"Do be careful, child," said I, ignoring personal allusions, and slipping behind her, for she was again astride the rail. "Hold tighter, if you want to be safe."

"How does you know about it if you hasn't done it?" said she, looking around at me sharply. "Has you ever slid down banisters?"

"Never—never in my life."

"Well, dese is splendid ones to learn on. Dere ain't no turns in 'em, an' dere ain't no big roun' knob at de bottom, eiver. Just let me teach you. You frow one foot over—so—" here she actually lifted my left foot across that rail, which caused me instinctively to fall forward and clutch tightly with both hands, to save myself from falling.

"Don't hold so tight," said she, "or you can't slide. Put your hands dis way—see?" Then she tugged at my hands with her own little fingers.

I still clung to the rail with my hands and endeavored to get off, but the little fingers were very strong, the rail was painfully smooth and too thick to grasp tightly; in an instant my grasp relaxed a little, and I slid swiftly downward, my feet finally striking the floor with a vigorous

thump. I looked around quickly, as women seem possessed to do when they have done anything ridiculous. I thought I had heard a titter; but there stood the two old women, looking as demure as Quakers at meeting on Lord's day. Not so little Alice: she stood at the head of the stairs, and clapped her pudgy hands vigorously, shouted "Hooray!" laughed, and finally said:

"I knew you could do dat, if you'd only try. I'll just tell my fahver next time when he comes home dat I teached de teacher to slide down banisters just as good as *I* could."

"If you do, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live," said I.

"Don't do it, pet," said Mistress Drusilla, quickly. "Be a little lady."

"Isn't it bein' a lady to tell de solemn trufe?" asked the child.

"Yes, darling," said Miss Dorcas, hastening to caress the child, "but the truth isn't to be told at all times."

"De times you can't tell it," said the child, who seemed half in a revery and half in a pout, "'pears to me is when you want to do it most."

"Precisely so," said I. "The times little girls

most want to tell the truth are those in which they shouldn't."

"Let's do somefin' else," suggested Alice, emerging from revery and pout. "'Tain't no good to go on talkin' to me 'bout de trufe, when I don't know what in de world you mean. I'll tell you what we can do; slide down some more, and you go first, so I can see if you do it right."

"I decline—emphatically."

"Mercy, what a big word! Say, Missis Drusilla, what's you goin' to have for dinner? I smells it a-cookin', and I's dreadful hungry."

"We are going to have boiled chicken and dumplings, pet, but they won't be done in a long time. It isn't eleven o'clock yet. It takes a long time to cook a dinner, pet."

"Well, I's firsty, anyway. Drinkin'-water don't have to be cooked."

A glass of water was brought, and the child drank like a heated horse. I would have been frightened, had I not remembered similar performances of children in my class-room in the city, and if Miss Dorcas had not whispered to me:

"She's everlastingly being taken that way, dear."

Then little Alice resumed her sliding, but soon

she tired of it, and longed for something new. I was heartily sorry for her, for I knew well the discomforts of imprisonment by shower, so I said:

"Isn't it too bad, dear, that it rained so hard?"

The child turned to me with a reproving look, and replied:

"Course it ain't. If 'twas too bad, honest and true, de Lord wouldn't let it rain: don't you know dat yet? Don't you know dat verse in de Bible—'I will give you de rain of your land in his due season'? dat means He sends it just when it ought to come. If it don't come 'xcept when de Lord sends it—an' I'd like to know how it can come any uvver way—den what makes it too bad? I guess you ain't been teached very good 'bout some of dem fings, else you wouldn't say noffin' like dat."

"I suppose you are right, dear; it isn't too bad that the rain has fallen; but I wish for your sake that there was something pleasant for you to do."

"Does you? Well, den you fink up somefin': dat's de way my fahver does, an' he keeps on finkin' till he finds it."

"H'm!" said I, as I began to cudgel my wits for some way of amusing the child.

"Anyfin' dat does for de children in your school

'll do for me, I guess. I ain't very hard to suit," said Alice, by way of encouragement.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't suit you, for I don't have any amusements in my school: the children come there only to study."

"What! All dem poor children you tole me 'bout?"

"Yes."

"An' you's so sorry for 'em, an' yet you don't do noffin' to 'muse 'em? Well, if I ever!"

Mistress Drusilla and Miss Dorcas joined the child in looking inquiringly at me at which I felt indignant. Was it not enough that I gave six or seven hours a day to my juvenile charges, wearing myself out for them, that I should be held to account for not doing more? Beside, even if I were inclined to devise amusements for them, there was no time allotted to such diversions by the officials who prepared the routine of study.

"I couldn't amuse my pupils if I would," said I. "I merely do as I am ordered by the school board, who don't provide amusements."

"How different from the days when we were young!" said Miss Dorcas to Mistress Drusilla. "Don't you remember how the teacher used to come out in the yard at recess and play tag with

us, and hopscotch, and how when it rained she would get up a game of "Button, button," in the school-room?"

"Indeed, yes," responded Mistress Drusilla; "and how when the teacher was a young man he played marbles and leap-frog with the boys."

"Well," said little Alice, "we's wastin' lots of time, an' not doin' noffin'. Lets play grasshopper. I'll show you how, if you don't know."

A single illustration, given with great vigor, caused all the adults to decline.

"Then let's play cookin'-school. You an' Missis Drusilla an' Miss Dorcas make cakes an' pies an' fings, an' I help you eat 'em. You needn't be 'fraid of makin' too many."

"Pet," said Mistress Drusilla, "the stove is pretty well covered with things being fixed for dinner, so we can't play cooking-school very well. Suppose we tell stories until we can think of something better. I don't believe Miss Brown has ever heard the story of——"

"Miss Brown!" exclaimed the child, looking at me gravely. "I wish you had a nicer name."

"I am satisfied with it," said I. "I am sorry it does not please you, but I assure you I didn't select it for myself."

"I named one of my dollies Miss Brown one time," said Alice, "an' my fahver wouldn't let me call her dat. He said——"

"You shouldn't interrupt, darling," said Miss Dorcas, gently. "Mistress Drusilla was saying something to you."

"I was only saying," resumed Mistress Drusilla, "that I didn't believe our friend had ever heard your story of the big rain."

"I don't believe I have," said I, anxious to divert the conversation from my name, of which I always felt I had reason to be proud. I certainly did not propose to defend it against any fancies or dislikes of this child's peculiar father.

"All right: I'll tell it to her," said little Alice; "but *I* fought everybody had heard dat story. Well, once dere was an awful big rain-storm. Folks knew it was comin', 'cause a smart man told 'em so, but dey didn't pay no 'tention to him. Dere was lots of fings goin' on dat suited 'em well enough, so dey didn't want to fink 'bout fings dat didn't suit 'em, and, of course, nobody wanted any rain. Well, one man dat knew all 'bout it began to get ready for it; he made a great big boat for him an' his family an' all deir fings, so dere would be some place for him to go when it

got too rainy on shore. 'Twas an awful big boat—bigger'n a dozen houses in a row—bigger'n almos' any of dese steamships dat come 'long de ocean in front of our house, my fahver says.

"He didn't have a boat just to go in an' swim away from de storm, eiver. He was de kind of a man who had finked 'bout somefin' for children to do on rainy days, so he fixed up a whole lot of de boat so he could carry some animals too, 'cause all children likes animals. Dere was places for cows, so de children could have all de milk dey wanted to drink, when uvver folkses' children didn't have any 'cause de rain got so bad dat it spoiled de roads an' washed away de bridges, so de milkman didn't come. An' dere was places for dogs, 'cause my fahver says no man dat's got a heart is goin' to be happy indoors in a big storm if he knows his dog is out in de wet. Dere was places for kitties, too——Say, has you got a cat? I have; I got two of 'em. Just you come over to my house, an'——"

"Never mind the kitties now, pet," suggested Mistress Drusilla. "Go on with the story."

"Oh! Well, my kitties is nice, anyway. Well, de man what finked 'bout de storm fixed places for donkeys, too, an' my fahver says he shouldn't

wonder if dere was a nice long clear place in de ark—dat was de name of de boat—where de children could ride de donkeys once in a while durin' de day when dey didn't know what else to do while it was rainin'. But he had lots of uvver animals, too. Why, do you know, dat man finked so much 'bout what his little children would like dat he took a whole menagerie in dat boat—elephants, an' lions, an' bears, an' giraffes, an' all de kinds of animals dat's in de picture-books. He took lots of birds, too; chickens, so de family could have plenty of eggs to eat, an' larks to sing so's to wake de folkses up in de mornin', an' sparrows to go chirpin' roun', and geese to drop quills for de children to make squakers out of, an' monkeys dat would cut up an' make de children laugh. Oh! I just tell you what, 'twas nicer dan any Sunday-school picnic-boat you ever saw in your life. He took some uvver fings dat I don't fink was very nice—snakes, an' skeeters, an' flies, an' bedbugs——"

"Pet!" exclaimed Mistress Drusilla, reprovingly.

"Darling!" ejaculated Miss Dorcas.

"Well," said the child, "'twasn't my fault; I didn't tell him to take 'em. My fahver says he

s'poses Mr. Noah had to do it, else his family wouldn't have noffin' to grumble 'bout, an' folks dat haven't got noffin' else to grumble 'bout goes to work to find fault wiff each uvver. So when Noah got all de animals aboard, an' asked all his friends if dey didn't want to go too, an' dey said dey guessed not, it begun to look cloudy; so he ran down to de store to get de last fings dat had been forgot, and when he got back he shut de door of de ark, an' de rain began.

"Gracious! Dat *was* a rain! My fahver says he can't see why people tell lies 'bout big rain-storms, when once dere was a real rain so much bigger dan anybody can make believe about. It filled up de roads so folks couldn't change deir minds an' go down to de ark if dey wanted to. No matter how tight folks shutted deir doors an' windows, de rain got in de houses, and wouldn't go out again. It kept on goin' in till fires in de stoves was putted out by it, so dey couldn't cook no breakfasts. Den folks had to go upstairs to keep from gettin' deir feet wet; an' finely dey had to get in de attics an' on de roofs, an' den dere wasn't no place else to go, so dey just had to be drowned. To fink of all de little boys an' girls in de world bein' drowned 'xcept just a few dat was on a big

boat! I fink 'twas perfec'ly awful; but my fahver says 'twas de best fing dat could have happened to 'em, for de world in dem days wasn't a very good place for children to grow up in; 'most all dat men an' boys did was to fight an' get killed, an' de women an' girls had to cry lots 'bout it. But all de time of dat big rain dere wasn't nobody drowned on board de ark, an' dere wasn't no trouble dere, 'xcept p'raps it wasn't always easy to open de windows an' air de rooms when de rain was comin' down so hard. But de folks was all right; an' you know why? Cause dey'd finked beforehand 'bout what to do if a big rain came."

While this recital had been going on, Mistress Drusilla and Miss Dorcas nodded and smiled at each other as happily as if little Alice had been their own. They were erect and grave in an instant whenever the child's eyes wandered toward either of them, for they seemed possessed of the old-fashioned notion that a child, no matter how tenderly loved, should never be praised for any of its smart deeds or sayings, lest it should become vain. Consequently, many were the beaming smiles that were ruthlessly ruined during that ten-minutes moral discourse on the wather. As soon as it ended, however, the old sisters looked at me

with the utmost pride and triumph, and seemed rather surprised and pained that I did not indulge in some startling demonstration of approval. Miss Dorcas, as I afterward learned, was really pained at my apparent apathy; but the truth was that I was unaccustomed to the moral just drawn from the well-known story. As Miss Dorcas turned aside and led the child to the door to look at the rain, I found Mistress Drusilla regarding me with an air of solicitude and perplexity; then she said, in a low tone and hurriedly:

"I hope, my dear, it didn't seem unorthodox to you? Our minister has heard it, and I do assure you that he didn't seem to see any harm in it."

As for the little relator, she looked through the big hall window as if in search of another moral in the rain, still heavily falling; but presently she said, in an absent-minded manner, as if talking to herself:

"I would like to know why tellin' stories always makes me so dreadful hungry."

Then the old women smiled at each other, and Mistress Drusilla went to a jar in the dining-room and returned with a large piece of cake, and Miss Dorcas went to the cellar and got a goblet of milk, and the child accepted both with as much affec-

tation of surprise as if she were an accomplished actress. After the refreshments were disposed of, the youngster turned to me and said:

"Has you fought of somefin' yet?"

"Thought of something?"

"Yes; somefin' to do, you know—somefin' to do indoors; 'cause it's rainin' outdoors an' we can't go ramblin' around."

"Don't you do anything but ramble around, child, when the weather is pleasant?"

"No," said the child, with entire self-satisfaction. "My fahver says dat's de best way for me to learn somefin'. I go all 'bout de neighborhood an' see ev'ryfin' I can, an' den I go home an' ask gran'ma or my fahver all 'bout 'em; dat takes lots of time, you know. Mos' generally it's gran'ma I have to ask, 'cause my fahver ain't home——"

"Isn't home, you should say, my child," said I. The force of habit is strong, and I had not been a teacher, correcting bad grammar for years, for nothing.

"What did I say?" asked she, her eyes opening wonderingly.

"You said 'ain't'," I replied, "which was very awkward. 'Ain't' means 'am not.' You wouldn't say 'my father am not at home,' would you?"

"Of course not," was the reply, made with a most contemptuous look; "'cause why, it would sound awful pokey."

"I don't know what 'pokey' means," said I, "but you probably mean you would not say it because it would be ungrammatical. Well——"

"Ungarmatical!" she interrupted. "I 'member dat big word, 'cause one of our neighbors said it a lot of times one day when he was talkin' to my fahver 'bout de mornin' prayer—you know de mornin' prayer, I hope—de one dat begins 'Our Fahver?'"

"Certainly."

"Well, one of our neighbors made fun of it one day, 'cause he said 'Our Fahver *which* art in heaven' was ungarmatical, an' he said he didn't see how folks dat knew anyfin' could say a prayer in dat ungarmatical way. My fahver finked a little while, an' den he frowed away his cigar so hard dat it made my kitty jump out of de window. Den he said if all folks was so particular, he guessed prayin' wouldn't ever do 'em any good. Isn't it just awful to fink of folks bein' so particular 'bout little bits of fings? Dear me!"

The last two words were uttered with so much feeling that I began to feel very uncomfortable;

I would have felt worse had not my hostesses already busied themselves about something else, Miss Dorcas having begun to study the weather, and Mistress Drusilla having suddenly discovered that an old-fashioned, mirror-fronted cloak-closet in the hall required dusting. Nevertheless, I ventured upon no more grammatical corrections. Had I chosen to, there would not have been opportunity, for the child quickly continued:

"Haven't you fought of somefin' yet? 'Cause, if you haven't, I have. Let's play school."

At last the good seed I had sown in fear and trembling was to bear fruit.

"Let's play school," the child continued. "You an' de two missesses be scholars, an' I'll be de teacher."

"What's that, pet?" asked Mistress Drusilla, clasping her dust-cloth in both hands, her eyes beaming encouragingly through her well-polished glasses.

"What did you say, dear?" asked Miss Dorcas, suddenly turning from the window and ignoring meteorological phenomena.

"I said, let's play school, and I'll be de teacher. I'll fix fings. Just wait a minute."

While the two old women smiled at each other

in expectant ecstasy, little Alice dragged from the dining-room, one after another, three large old-fashioned chairs, which she placed in a row near the large window in the hall. Then she brought out a high chair (which afterward I learned had been purchased especially for her accommodation) and placed it in front of the pupils.

"Miss Dorcas," said she, "I don't believe I can teach right 'less I have some spectacles. Will you please lend me yours?"

"Gracious, child!" said the old lady, as she removed her glasses, yet hesitated to relinquish them; "you won't be able to see a thing with these specs."

"Dat don't matter," said the child, taking the glasses and putting them over her little nose and ears; "gran'ma says de teacher dat sees least generally gets along best. Say"—this remark was addressed to me—"you always wear spectacles when you teach de children, don't you?"

My only answer was an indignant look. Frank Wayne had often said, five years before, that my eyes were the most perfect in the world. I was sure they had not changed in any way since that time. Then the child climbed into her high chair and continued:

"I guess we won't have any roll-call, 'cause I know you's all here. We won't have any Bible-readin', eiver, 'cause de teacher can't read; but dat don't make no diff'rence; dat's what my fahver says."

So saying, the pretended teacher opened a book —it was "Morning and Night Watches," which had lain on the window-ledge in the hall—and said:

"The school will come to 'tention. Class in 'rifmetic, stand up."

The two old women giggled, winked at me, and arose.

"The new girl from New York is in dat class," said the little teacher. "Why don't she get up, too?"

All this was very silly, but there was no one to see, as Frank Wayne once said when I became indignant at him for taking the unpardonable liberty of kissing me; so I arose, trying to discourage the teacher with a freezing look.

"Now," said Miss Alice, "dere ain't any slate or blackboard, so I'll give you some sums dat you can do wivout. If some folks bring a little girl some candies on a rainy day, an' den help her eat 'em, how many is de little girl goin' to get for herself?"

The only audible answer was a chuckle from Mistress Drusilla, who nudged me with her elbow.

"Never mind," said the teacher, after looking at each of us inquiringly. "You can bring de answer in de mornin'. I guess I'll call de joggrify class. Now; if de world is round, just like an orange, how's we to learn just how it looks unless we's got some oranges here?"

"The grocer is going to bring some this afternoon, dear," said Miss Dorcas.

"We'll put off de joggrify till den, I guess," said the teacher, "an' call dis de readin' class. De scholar dat's named Brown will read a story; an' it mustn't be a stupid one, neiver."

Then Mistress Drusilla nudged me again, and I replied, with some effort:

"I haven't any story-book to read from."

"Den make believe you's got one," said Alice.

I tried to recall a story, and failed, as most people do when suddenly called upon. The teacher spared me by saying:

"Next."

Mistress Drusilla did not respond, and I was tempted to return one of her familiar nudges, but it seemed undignified.

"Next," repeated the small figure in the high chair, throwing back her head and dropping her lower jaw like spectacled people in general. Miss Dorcas imitated a child's voice as closely as she could, and replied:

"If you please, teacher, I haven't learned my lesson. I'm very sorry."

"So am I," said the little creature, gravely. "I don't see but I's got to read it myself. Well——" Here she opened her book and looked into it, turned the leaves forward and backward, cleared her throat, and finally began:

"Once dere was a time when dere wasn't any rain in a country dat's a long way off, an' ev'ry-body in dat country came to have lots of trouble to get anyfin' to eat, 'cause noffin' could grow in de gardens an' on de farms, 'cause dere wasn't any water to make 'em grow. An' dere was a good man named 'Lijah dat didn't have noffin' to eat 'xcept what birds brought him, an' I guess de birds didn't have noffin' to bring him after a while, 'cause one day he went to a woman's house an' begged for somefin' to eat. De poor woman didn't have noffin' but a little flour an' some oil: dat's what dey use over dere instead of butter an' meat. An' 'Lijah told her dat if she'd make some

biscuit and give him some she'd always find meal in de barrel an' oil in de jar till de rain came again. An' it turned out just like he told her. Dat man 'Lijah was awful smart: he didn't care to do noffin' but what he fought de Lord wanted him to do; dat's de reason he was so awful smart, my fahver says.

"Well, dat 'Lijah—he was de same man dat made a lot of stones burn up by askin' de Lord to let a lot of fire come down on 'em—de day he got dat fire to come down, an' den made de people take all de bad preachers away an' kill 'em, dat same day 'Lijah began to fink 'twas 'bout time for a spell of wevver to come, now de country had got rid of its bad old preachers. So he told his servant to go tell de king dat dere was rain a-comin'. Dey was all out in de country, de king bein' out ridin', an' de king had begun to believe dat 'Lijah knew what he was talkin' 'bout. So he got in his chariot—de king was carriage-people, you know—and whipped up de horses to hurry home. Dere was 'Lijah, dat had been doin' so much good, walkin' along de awful dusty road; but de king didn't ask him to jump in an' take a ride; he didn't fink of noffin' but himself. He was sure he was goin' to get what he wanted, so

he didn't care noffin' more for de man what had done it for him, so he whipped up his horses an' left 'Lijah trottin' along in de dusty road. De king had good horses—kings has de best of ev'ryfin', you know—but first fing he knew, 'Lijah had run so fast dat he'd got to town first. De reason was dat folks who ain't got anybody but 'emselves to help 'em get out of de rain, or any uvver trouble, is pretty sure to have more 'go' to 'em dan uvver folks, like kings, dat has ev'ryfin' done for 'em."

"What makes you think so, dear?—teacher, I mean," asked Mistress Drusilla.

"'Cause my fahver says so," replied the child.

"I do believe it's time for the dinner to be done: I'm afraid it's burning," said Miss Dorcas.

"School's out," said the teacher, moving rapidly toward the dining-room.

As for me, I was obliged to believe that the little teacher's father had a faculty for drawing practical lessons from everything.

FOURTH DAY.

A COUNTERFEIT PRESENTMENT.

THE ice of my reserve having been entirely melted by the shower, there was nothing to prevent little Alice being made entirely at home at my boarding-house the next day, which also was rainy. She entered with a cheery "Here we are again," which I was inclined to criticise as ungrammatical until Mistress Drusilla told me it was a common salutation of the child's father when he reached home Saturday evenings. The uniform failure of my criticisms of anything which had emanated from "my fahver" had warned me to ignore that gentleman's ways whenever they were brought to my notice by his daughter. Beside, little Alice's voice was not the only one which broke the stillness of my temporary home. There arose to my room, as I prepared to descend, the wail of a cat. I knew my hostesses disliked cats; as for me, I hated them. Many a night had I been roused from slumber by the cries of pussies

in city yards, until I wondered how Noah's family got any sleep at all while cruising about in the ark. The cat whose voice mingled with that of little Alice seemed to be protesting against something, and its notes were high and piercing.

"You know, pet, we never liked cats," I heard Mistress Drusilla say as I entered the old-fashioned sitting-room.

"Never, darling," declared Miss Dorcas.

The child looked hopefully toward me, but in return I gazed icily at a small feline head which rested on little Alice's elbow, as I said:

"I'd about as lieve have a snake in the house as a cat."

"Well, I never!" said the child, looking curiously at me. "Where *did* you ever get used to snakes so as to like 'em?"

Mistress Drusilla suddenly hurried to a corner window, saying, under her breath, that she believed there was a draught coming from that way somehow; Miss Dorcas found a button loose on the back of the venerable hair-cloth sofa. But the child continued to stare at me, and soon exclaimed:

"Say—where did you? Dere's a picture on a fence down in de village, 'bout a big girl dat tamed

snakes an' is goin' to play wiff some of 'em in de circus dat's a-comin'; but she don't look like you."

"Miaouw!" exclaimed the cat. For the first time in my life I felt grateful to a member of the feline species.

"Poor kittie!" said the child.

"Miaouw!" repeated the animal.

"It's such a poor little fing," said Alice, sitting down and arranging the beast—a half-grown kitten—on her lap, handling it in sections, as if it were a thing of pasteboard and joints, such as I had owned when a child. It certainly was "a poor little fing." It had been thoroughly soaked by the rain, and, apparently, rolled in the mud afterward. It seemed as thin as a lizard, as ugly as one of Doré's imps, and as frightened as a child of the slums brought suddenly into decent surroundings. When it cried the two old women put their fingers to their ears. Finally, Mistress Drusilla, with her ears still closed, said, in a very loud voice:

"Alice, pet, if you like you may take her to the kitchen and put her in the basket where we keep new-hatched chickens until they're a few hours old. Then put the basket in front of the stove."

"I don't fink," said the child, as she carefully

smoothed the wretched animal's ears, "dat you'd like it, if you'd got all wet an' knocked in de mud, to be put in a chicken-basket an' set in front of de fire. You'd want somebody to pet you an' comfort you an' tell you how sorry dey was, an' some body to listen to you while you told 'em all about how it happened. Folks dat's in trouble likes to be coddled; dey don't like to be stuck off in a basket all alone to coddle 'emselves; do dey, kittie?"

"Miaouw!" responded the waif.

"You coddle the kitten, then, pet," said Mistress Drusilla, cautiously removing her fingers from her ears; "but let her tell you about her troubles some other time when she won't have to feel unpleasant at having so many other people around. You wouldn't like a whole lot of folks listening if you were going to tell some of your troubles to a friend, would you? Beside, you wouldn't scream out everything you had to say, like that dreadful kitten."

"Don't you fink so? Well, mebbe not; but if you lived at our house an' had to hear de folks dat come in to tell deir troubles to gran'ma, you'd see—dat's all."

The child began to look meditative. Miss Dor-

cas came slowly from the window, stood behind me, and whispered:

"Now look out for a story. Her grandmother is a dear, sympathetic soul, and people cry all over her and tell her all sorts of things. It's none of my business; I don't want to know anything about other folks' affairs(!): goodness knows it takes me all my time to look after my own. Still, things do get out in the neighborhood once in a while that some folks wouldn't have get out for anything, and, come to find out, that child has heard them when nobody supposed she was paying any attention to what was being said to her grandmother. Of course the child doesn't know what it means to be a tale-bearer; she repeats other people's stories just as she does her father's; but they do make the greatest row in the neighborhood sometimes, because they're always laid to somebody else."

Little Alice still remained in a brown study; the kitten, cuddled in her lap, and pacified by gentle treatment and the warmth of the room, began purring softly. Miss Dorcas moved softly to the other side of the room, so as to attract the attention of her sister; Mistress Drusilla caught her eye, and there was an exchange of expectant

glances. The kitten yawned. The child, recalled from contemplation, caressed the animal, and roused herself.

"Now," said Miss Dorcas again, tiptoeing up to me and whispering, "she's thought it out, and she's been so long about it that I'm sure it'll be specially interesting."

"Teacher," said the child, looking earnestly at me, "I do wish you'd tell me how you learned to like snakes as much as kittens. I fink it's de awfullest fing I ever heard tell of."

The two old women seemed to shrink as they sat in their chairs. Although I did not look at them, I could not help seeing that Miss Dorcas acted exactly like a school-child caught at some flagrant offence against school discipline. Mistress Drusilla arose hastily, and said:

"I'm sure that poor kitten needs something to eat, pet, after its dreadful wetting. I'll go get you some milk for it."

"I'll do it, Mistress Drusilla," said Miss Dorcas. Both old people left the room in haste, to my great relief, and they were not more than out of the door when Miss Dorcas shouted:

"Bring her to the kitchen right away, darling."

"Come along, Teacher," said Alice.

"No, no; I mean the kitten, child," came quickly back from the hall.

Bless the old women for their sympathy! I began to feel that they must have come from very good stock. As for little Alice, she started with the waif, but stopped in the doorway, and said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do; I'll let you keep Agonies in your room all de time you's here if you'll tell me how you learned to like nasty old snakes as much as—"

A thin, withered hand came silently but swiftly from beside the door, clutched the child's arm, snatched the questioner away, and, from sounds that followed, was apparently applied firmly to a small mouth.

Relieved of my tormentor, my first impulse was to go to my room and remain there. The sky was gloomy, so to look forward to a whole day of reading was not cheering; but anything would be preferable to chance questioning, before witnesses, by an irresponsible being like Miss Alice Hope. Yet I had become so fond of the child that it seemed to me the day would be darker if I were deprived of her companionship. If I could get her to my own room and have her to myself, I could ignore unpleasant speeches and

direct conversation to suit myself; but from what I already had learned of other people's affairs through my landladies, I could not doubt that as soon as I concluded my brief summer outing all that passed between us in conversation would become known to everybody who might care to listen. I had half a mind to take refuge in waterproof cloak, overshoes, and the outer air; but as I stood at a window and debated the question with myself, the old women and child, without the cat, reappeared in the sitting-room, and little Alice remarked, solemnly:

"I'm not goin' to talk any more about snakes. Miss Dorcas an' Mistress Drusilla says it ain't polite to talk about what other folks don't like; an' besides, dere's reasons why dey wants you to like me ever so much: so you can go on an' like me just as much as you wants to, dough I don't see what de reasons is dat dey talks about."

Then the old women looked guilty again, and made excuses for disappearing; so I was soon left alone with little Alice. That young woman didn't seem to realize that she had said anything unusual. She took a look at the weather, and for some moments did not seem to see anything but threatening skies and dishevelled phloxes and petunias;

but suddenly she turned and said, with the air of a Pharisee of the Pharisees:

"Well, I's been a good Smatteran, anyway."

"You've—what?" I asked.

"I's been a good Smatteran—don't you know? I fought ev'rybody knew all about dat."

"I'm not everybody, dear," said I. "I wish you would tell me what you mean by a 'good Smatteran.'"

"Dear me! I should fink you'd never been to Sunday-school in your life," said the child, with a pitying look. "Don't you know de story about de man dat had all his fings hooked?"

"I've heard of so many affairs of that kind," said I, "that I can't be sure as to which you allude."

"Why, I mean dat man dat went from Jerusalem, where King David used to live, to a town named Jericho. My fahver says dere wasn't any p'licemen in dem days, an' maybe he went after dark, when dere wasn't any 'lectric lamps or uvver lights 'long de road to let 'em see what was in front of 'em. Anyhow, some bad old fiefs come along an' knocked him down an' stole his money an' his clothes, an' left him layin' in de road about half dead; dat's worse dan bein' all dead, my fahver says.

"Well, along came a preacher, an' seen dat man a-layin' dere, but he didn't have noffin' to do wiff him. My fahver says he guesses de preacher fought de hooked man was a tramp, an' preachers ain't got no time to fink about tramps when dey knows lots of uvver preachers needs to be set right. Beside, who wants to look at a man dat's been in a fight an' got all mussed up in de dirt? Preachers fink dat p'licemen and constables ought to take care of such folks. So de preacher went across de street, an' walked along where dere wasn't noffin' to look at dat would upset de finks he was finkin' about.

"By-an'-by come along a Levite—dat was de kind of man dat knowed all about de law. De law was made for sinners, my fahver says, but I guess de law-man finked de man layin' in de dirt wasn't a sinner, 'cause he went along on de uvver side of de street, too. An' all dis time dat poor man dat had his fings hooked was layin' dere half dead, wivout any doctor to make him well, or any gran'ma to tell him to come home right away an' put some clean clothes on 'fore somebody would come along and fink he didn't have nobody to take care of him.

"Den dere come along a Smatteran. Folks

didn't fink much of Smatterans in dem days, 'cause dey come from a little town in de back country where folks didn't know much, an' hadn't read no books, nor made no laws, nor preached no sermons, nor read de newspapers; so dey was just as bad as de folks dat lives down on de beach here, dat ain't no good except to work cheap for uvver people. Dat Smatteran was ridin' on a donkey: so I s'pose he must have been de donkey-man at a Sunday-school picnic. Well, he got off of his donkey, an' he looked at de hooked man, an' he put court-plaster on de places where he'd been cut, an' he doctored him wiff wine an' oil—vaseline, I guess—an' den he put him on de donkey an' took him along to a hotel, an' gave de hotel-man a penny, an' told him to take care of de poor man till he come along dat way again. Like enough de penny de Smatteran gave de hotel-man was one de poor good man had been keepin' to buy a stick of candy or a fig or somefin' to carry home to his own little girl, 'cause dat's what fahvers do wiff deir last pennies. So it was all de harder for him to pay it to de hotel-man, 'cause he wouldn't like his little girl to be disappointed when he got home."

"The penny in the story you are telling," said I,

"was a great deal more than what we call a penny nowadays. It was fully enough to pay for the care of a man at a country hotel for a day or two."

"Is dat so?" asked the child, with a very sober face. "Den I wish you hadn't told me about it: I's always been sorry for dat Smatteran's little girl."

"But what has all this to do with you, child, that you should think yourself like the good Samaritan?"

"Well, I declare! You don't know! Dear me! you's about as slow to understand anyfin' as folks was when Jesus used to tell stories. Why, de way is, dere was a poor little kittie along de road dat had got all rained on an' muddy, an' I brought it in, an' nobody wanted to be nice to it a bit. Mistress Drusilla an' Miss Dorcas put deir fingers in deir ears when it cried, an' you said you'd as lieve have a snake as a cat. Say—I wish I knew; —oh, no! I forgot; I mustn't say anyfin' about dat again. But I took care of de poor little fing, an' comforted it all I could, when ev'rybody else was lettin' it alone all dey could. Den I gave it a whole cupful of milk."

"But 'twas milk that Mistress Drusilla sup-

plied," said I, wishing to have justice done to the priest and the Levite.

'But if de kittie hadn't drinked it I could have drinked it myself," said the child, with a sigh. "It's just like de Smatteran's penny: dat's what makes me like de Smatteran. I wish, dough, dat I could have felt like you, 'cause I'd have been all de gooder if I'd liked snakes as much as—oh, pshaw! dere I goes again, after I promised I wouldn't! I do wish I didn't always have to be wonderin' about fings!"

"Come up to my room, dear, and see if we can't find something else to think about. If I can do anything to take your wondering out of you, I'll take pains to do it."

"Oh! will you?" said the child, with a look of ecstatic longing. "Den tell me when you saw de snakes dat——"

I hastily picked up the child, carried her to my room, placed her on my bed, kissed her several times, and finally said:

"Now let us have a good time. I wish you had all your dolls here; but, as you haven't, I'll do anything else that will make you happy."

"Will you, really?" she asked. "Den s'pose you cut me some paper dolls."

"Paper dolls?"

"Yes—don't you know? You cut dolls out of paper an' make believe dey's people."

"I don't believe I've ever done that," said I, after rapidly reviewing the amusements of my own juvenile days.

"Haven't you? Well, my fahver says it's never too late to learn. If you'll get some paper an' scissors, I'll show you de rest."

I quickly found the material and tools, and the child laboriously carved from a sheet of paper a figure which in outline resembled some of the dreadful idols I had seen exhibited in church missionary-meetings.

"Dere," she exclaimed, as she held the hideous thing up in full view, "dat's a boy doll, if you fink so hard enough."

I wondered if any amount of thought which I could exert would make the scrap of paper seem anything but grotesque. Suddenly, however, I remembered that I had brought a box of water-colors with me. I shall never forget the exclamation of delight which escaped the child as I floated some carmine wash into the top of the "boy doll."

"Oh-h-h!" Alice murmured, as she looked at

the bedaubed bit of paper; "he's almost like real folks, ain't he? Now let's make some girl dolls; den you can paint all you want to wivout doin' too much."

The girl that was evolved from the paper appeared so quickly that some essentials were noticeable principally by their absence. But little Alice did not miss them; she was awaiting the touch of the paint-brush; and as I endeavored to bestow a dull-red skirt, a light-green waist, and a citrine sash, the child's breath came quick and fast, and she finally exclaimed:

"How lovely! Don't de little girls in your school like you to paint deir paper dolls?"

"They don't have paper dolls, dear; I don't suppose one of them ever thought of a paper doll."

"Wha-a-a-a-a-at? Why, de poor little fings! Don't dey ever fink about dolls at all?"

"I don't know, dear. How should I know what they think about, or what they like?"

"Well," she replied, dropping the scissors and paper, "if you don't know, I'd like to know who does? Doesn't you ever make 'em paper dolls, or paint 'em for 'em?"

"The idea! If any school-teacher were to do

such things for her pupils the Board of Education would think she was good for nothing."

"Den who does make your school-children paper dolls? 'Cause I 'member you said most of 'em didn't have fahvers or muvvers dat could do nice fings for 'em."

"Nobody, I suppose," said I, carelessly.

"You don't mean dat dey don't have any paper dolls at all, do you?" asked the child, with wondering eyes.

"That is just what I do mean," I replied; "and you will learn one of these days, my dear, that the children you are talking about don't know the difference, and don't miss paper dolls at all. Probably they never saw paper dolls: so how can they think about them and want them?"

"H'm," said the child, pressing a partly-painted doll to her heart and leaving on the front of her white pinafore a red blotch which might be taken for a pink jockey-cap or a half-ripened strawberry. "I wonder where you was brought up, to fink dat way. Don't you ever fink about fings you never saw, an' want to have 'em?"

The child's question set me to thinking, and I am not sure that I made any reply. I went on coloring dolls, working very slowly, and indulging

in all sorts of vagaries of color, contrast, and combination. The longer I thought, the more point there seemed to the child's question. Certainly I had never wasted much time in wishing for pleasures that money could buy; I had been trained to believe that "a man's life (or a woman's) consisteth not in the abundance of the things that he (or she) possesseth." It was a matter of family pride that none of my ancestors, on either side, had ever taken part in the mad race for wealth and luxury. For what had I most longed? I could honestly answer: a contented mind and a useful life, with the love of those about me. If Frank Wayne had only——

"Say—don't you?" exclaimed the child. The question recalled me from my revery. I did not want to make a father confessor of a child, but I could not help snatching the little torment into my arms and kissing her repeatedly.

"I fought you did," she replied, as she straightened a paper doll which between us had been crushed out of all semblance of shape. "Well, I should fink you might know dat de dreadful poor little children in your school felt de same way, an' felt it awful much, if dey's got such almost noffin' as you say dey has."

Evidently this child knew nothing of class distinctions and the grovelling tastes of the children of the slums. Probably her father was one of the ranting, enthusiastic fellows who imagine every one to be of like feelings and aspirations with themselves. I remembered Frank Wayne once speaking of a school-room—just such a one as I afterward controlled—that he had accidentally visited, and how he believed its walls should be covered with pictures and its windows filled with flowers. I remembered, too, that when I told him the pupils would quickly disfigure the pictures and destroy the flowers so as to throw them at one another, he retorted that he had seen more flowers blooming in the windows of one block of tenement-houses than in all the windows on Fifth Avenue. This reply made me indignant. It never is pleasant to have one's cherished theories upset by a lot of facts; in such cases one doesn't know what to say.

"I guess," said Alice Hope, with earnest accent upon the last word, "I guess dis paper doll ain't good for much 'xcept to start a hospital wiff. Don't matter, dough; guess we couldn't be happy if we didn't have nobody to be sorry for. I don't want to spoil any more; but say—if we do, den

this one will have somebody to keep it company."

For a few moments the work of shaping and decorating semblances of humanity continued. I was busy with my thoughts, and the child, I supposed, was giving her entire mind to scissors and paper. When, however, as I finished a doll and a day-dream at the same time, and then impatiently threw the doll upon the floor, the child stooped and picked up the discarded scrap-paper, giving me a childish warning at the same time against wastefulness. Suddenly, however, she looked at the recovered doll intently, burst out laughing, and pressed it to her lips.

"You silly child!" said I, smiling at her.

"I ain't silly," she replied, holding the bit of paper at arm's length, and contemplating it with a face full of smiles, "but I never saw anyfin' so funny in all my life! Does you know what? You's gone an' made dat doll look just like my fahver!" Then she kissed the daub again and again.

I rose hastily and took the scrap of paper from her hand. As I did so it seemed to me that my face was ablaze. I knew that I had sketched on it, in neutral tints, my recollection of Frank

Wayne: that was the reason I had thrown it away. The Hopes and the Waynes were not related, or I should have known it during my acquaintance with Frank; but there is a facial resemblance, I suppose, among men who think alike, and by what the child had for several days been saying about her father I had frequently been reminded of my recreant lover's mental peculiarities.

"I didn't know dat you knew my fahver," said the child, standing very close to me as I looked again at the picture I had thrown away.

"I don't know him. I never saw him in my life," said I.

"Den of course you doesn't," said she, looking depressed; "but when I shows him dat paper doll, he'll fink it's awful funny dat somebody else can be just like him."

"Will he?" thought I. "Not unless my right hand has lost its cunning." Then I said to the child: "The picture isn't done, dear, and I threw it away rather than waste time on it, but I suppose I may as well finish it." Seizing my brush, I quickly made the head bald, covered the eyes with large spectacles, and slightly lengthened the ears.

"You's spoiled my fahver!" exclaimed the child.

"'Twasn't meant for your father, dear," said I, kindly. Having destroyed the supposed resemblance, I could afford to be consolatory to any extent. "Don't you see? The man I meant to draw was a man who is so smart that he knows everything, or——"

"Den why didn't you leave it like it was?—'cause dat's just de kind of man my fahver is. Can't you make him back again like he was?"

"Perhaps so, when it becomes entirely dry," said I, with a mental reservation that by that time it should be reduced to indistinguishable fragments. That it should not again fall into the youngster's hands, I placed it between the leaves of a sketch-book which I was using on a table. After this the work of making paper dolls continued with industry and interest. To divert the child's thoughts from the unfortunate picture which resembled her father, I devoted myself to brilliant and tasteful coloring, and, remembering that I once had taken lessons in figure-drawing, I outlined men, women, and children with my pencil, and the little fingers guided the scissors over the lines with more or less success until the dinner-bell rang.

"Come on," shouted Miss Alice Hope, as the

cheering jingle reached our ears. "I's 'most starved." She slid down the stair-rail, thus gaining some steps on me, and as I approached the dining-room door I heard her exclaim:

"Say, Mistress Drusilla an' Miss Dorcas, what do you fink? Why, teacher made a paper doll look just exactly like my fahver! Did you ever hear of such a funny fing as dat?"

The old women were exchanging odd smiles as I entered the room, but the exchanges were broken abruptly as I appeared.

"Say—did you?" the child repeated.

"There's nothing very strange about it, pet, I'm sure," said Miss Drusilla.

"Nothing at all, darling," said Miss Dorcas.

"There are so many men in the world who look alike," said Mistress Drusilla, "that I sometimes wonder how people can tell men apart. 'Twasn't so in my day."

"No, indeed," said Miss Dorcas. "In our time, when we were young, each man had his own style of face and clothes; but now it does seem as if all the men that go to the city have their clothes cut from the same goods and according to the same pattern, and they all wear mustaches turned up at the ends in just the same way. Why, goodness

me! last time I was down to the railroad dépôt in the village, and a lot of the young fellows that were summer boarders got off the train, it made me think of war times, when nearly everybody was in uniforms just exactly alike. For the life of me, I couldn't see how gals could tell whether they kissed their own sweethearts or somebody else's."

"You could," said Mistress Drusilla, with a far-away look, "if you'd ever——"

"To be sure—of course," said Miss Dorcas, hastily rising and helping her sister to potatoes so that she might have an excuse to give the old woman a sly squeeze.

"Well," said Alice Hope, who during these explanations had been stowing away bread and gravy as industriously as if she had no mind for anything else. "I never saw anybody else dat looked like my fahver; an' if dere is a lot of uvver men dat looks dat way I fink dis world is good deal nicer place dan I ever heard it was before."

"How is the kitten, little Samaritan?" I asked, in order to change the subject. "I'm afraid you've left her entirely to the hotel-keeper, without even paying a penny for her board."

A spoonful of bread and gravy stopped half-way

between plate and mouth, but it soon resumed its journey as the child said:

"I'll give Mistress Drusilla an' Miss Dorcas lots of kisses after dinner. Dey often give me pennies for kisses, so it'll be all right."

"To be sure it will, pet."

"Certainly, darling."

"Dat's all fixed, den," said the child, redoubling for a little while her attentions to her plate; then she said, between mouthfuls: "When you see dat picture you'll fink it's like my fahver, too."

"Oh," exclaimed Mistress Drusilla, "I'll be real glad. I always did say that the picture your grandmother has doesn't do your father justice. There's so much in his face that men don't seem to see: it takes a woman's eye to understand all that's good in a man of that kind."

"Little girls' eyes can do it pretty well, I fink," remarked Alice Hope, as she passed her plate for more dinner.

"So they can, pet," said Mistress Drusilla.

"Indeed yes," assented Miss Dorcas. "You'll show us the picture right after dinner, won't you?"

"The silly child," said I, "found a fancied resemblance to her father in a wretched daub of a

paper doll, which I afterward changed to make it look as I wanted it."

"Yes, but you's goin' to make it back again de way it was, don't you 'member, when it gets dry?"

"If I can, dear," said I, controlling by a violent effort my impulse to speak in my severest classroom tone and refuse entirely to touch that detested daub again. Then I mentally informed myself that if I were not wise enough to make away with that scrap of paper before it could make more trouble I was not worthy of my old self.

The meal proceeded without further disturbing remarks; and as after dinner little Alice was invited to the kitchen to feed the kitten while the hostesses cleared the table, I had time to go to my room, lock the door, and apply a match to the picture which resembled two different men. I even softly crumbled the charred remains into a tiny heap of ashes, and, provokingly enough, dropped a tear upon them. I am sure I did not mean to cry over a lost love—the memory of a man who had for years been another woman's husband—yet somehow it happened. Tears are most unreasoning things: they persist in following one

another even when they can't help knowing they are not wanted, and the more unconscious one tries to be of their presence the more they persist in reddening the eyes. Fortunately, a child as young as Alice would not notice that I had been crying; so I hastened to wipe my eyes and cool them with a damp handkerchief, and as soon as I heard little footsteps on the floor below I hastened to hum a tune and to begin a water-color sketch of the scene from the window in front of me. It was not difficult work at the start, for a single tone of green answered for the mass of old spruces which shut out everything else but blue sky. As the child bounced into the room and saw what I was doing, she uttered a long-drawn "Oh-h!" and stood motionless, though she broke the silence every two or three moments by softly murmuring, "Dear me!" "Gracious!" "Well, I never!" or some similar expression of wonder. When finally I stopped a moment to contemplate the sketch, she said:

"Dat's just too lovely for anyfin'. I fink you might let me bring up Mistress Drusilla and Miss Dorcas to look at it. Dey don't have lots to make 'em happy, you know: dey don't have noffin' but me."

"They shall see it, dear, when it is done. You shall give it to them."

"Oh, you dear, good old fing!" the child exclaimed, throwing her arms around me. "But don't you fink 'twould make 'em happier to see it growin'? It's so perfectly wonderful to see a lot of outdoors grow on a piece of paper dat way."

"Very well, dear: you may ask them to come up, if you like."

"Goody, goody, goody!" Away went little Alice, and several minutes afterward the two old sisters came in as softly as if they feared they might break the picture if they made a noise. They were as much pleased as any artist could have hoped; so what I had begun in desperation I began to finish with extreme care. A ring at the door called them away suddenly, and no sooner had they departed than the child said, timidly:

"Don't it need to get dry before you finish it?"

"Yes, dear."

"Den let it rest a little while, can't you, an' make my fahver's picture back right again."

"I'm very sorry, dear" (I really was sorry for her sake), "but—I began doing something to it as soon as I came up, and somehow I spoiled it entirely."

"So it can't be fixed, nohow?"

"Nohow, dear."

"Dat's too bad," she said gravely, as she seated herself on the bed. I was greatly relieved at finding her take the announcement so calmly, and told myself, as I went on with my sketch, that I might have expected as much; children's thoughts are short-lived. Soon, however, a strange sound from the bed made me turn quickly and behold little Alice crying as if her heart would break. Seeing that I noticed her, she sobbed:

"I ain't seen my fahver in—four whole days an'—dat picture was 'most as good as seein' him again, an'—I's been finkin' about it ever since you said you could make it over again, an'—an' I can't! Oh, dear, dear!"

"You poor, dear child," said I, hastening to comfort her; "it is too bad; but just think how you'll see your father himself pretty soon, instead of an old piece of paper."

"I know it; but I did—oh, I did want to see dat picture again—so much!" Then came a fresh flood of tears.

"Alice, dear," I whispered in desperation, fearing my landladies might return, "if I try to make a picture just like it again, will you promise not

to talk about it—to anybody? I don't like to have my pictures talked about—by any one."

"I'll promise," she exclaimed, springing up. "I'll promise, certain sure."

I reseated myself quickly, and began to draw.

It was not difficult to outline the face I remembered so well, yet I did it with a feeling of savage desperation, wishing heartily that there was no such thing as resemblance in the world. As I dropped my pencil to take a softer one for shading, a little hand stole in front of me, took the paper, and kissed it repeatedly. I attempted to take it back, saying:

"It isn't finished yet, dear."

"It's finished enough for me," the child replied, still retaining the picture. "Dear old fahver! Don't you fink he's lovely?"

"I think he—the picture—is fine-looking," I admitted.

"Den why don't you kiss it?" she asked. "I don't see how you can help it."

Then, suiting the action to the thought, she held the picture in front of me, while with one chubby hand she pressed it to my lips.

FIFTH DAY.

EXCURSIONS, RURAL AND OTHERWISE.

"You isn't much like uvver city folks, is you?"

This question, propounded the morning after the storm, and while I did not imagine any one was near me, startled me as if it were the traditional thunder-clap from a clear sky. I had awoke to find the rain ended and the few remaining clouds melting away before the sun. They acted like so many mischievous school-children shrinking into their seats on the approach of their teacher. I had eaten my breakfast hastily, and gone out to the piazza to enjoy the spectacle of the early mists moving about over the lowlands, a mile or two away, between the house and the ocean. The warmth of the sun was so welcome, and the air so fresh and balmy, that I soon hurried to the edge of the pine grove to enjoy a view entirely unobstructed by trees or shrubbery. I was contemplating in absolute ecstasy a picture such as I never before had imagined could be painted even by

nature, when suddenly I was obliged to recall another and smaller work of nature by the question quoted above.

"My dear child," said I—not in my most pleasing tone, I fear—"how you startled me! How is it that you always appear so suddenly?"

"Suddenly?" the little one echoed, as she looked at me with a quizzical air. "Why, I's been standin' here about an hour, wonderin' how you could keep standin' still so long."

"An hour? I was asleep in bed an hour ago."

"Was you? Well, it seemed an hour, anyway. It always seems an awful long time when anybody stands as still as if dey was dead. When I does anyfin' naughty an' my fahver stands an' looks at me an' just keeps still, it 'pears like a hundred hours. But you isn't, is you?"

"I'm not what?"

"You isn't like uvver city folks, I mean. Here you's been here lots or days, an' you ain't ever been on any 'scursions. Anyway, if you have, I ain't heard of 'em; you didn't tell anyfin' about em, or take me wiff you."

"Ah! I see; at least, I think I begin to see," I replied, looking keenly into the little face, which returned my gaze as innocently as if its owner

were not under suspicion of indulging in an artful little trick. "Did you come over here, so early in the morning, merely to tell me this?"

"No," said the child, raising a chubby hand with a letter in it. "I just come to bring a letter gran'ma got from de post-office for Mistress Drusilla. We gets her letters for her, 'cause she ain't got anybody to send to de post-office. But I fought of it while I was comin' along; so I fought I'd say it."

"I beg your pardon," said I, mentally informing myself that being a teacher of bad children was making me shamefully suspicious.

"Seein' dat I fought about it, an' said it," continued the child, "you might tell me. My fahver says dat when city people come to de country to rest de first fing dey do is to get 'emselves tired to deff goin' on 'scursions. But you ain't dat way, is you? Dat's what I said first, you know."

"I might be," I murmured, looking again at the glorious landscape, and wishing I might have a closer view of some charming bits of wood and field that arrested my eye—"I might be, if I had any one to go with me and guide me to what is worth seeing."

"I don't fink you'd have any trouble about dat,"

said the child, "for my fahver says he don't know of a nicer person to go on a 'scursion wiff dan me."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, indeed an' in trufe. He's tried lots of uvver folks, he says, an' nobody 'joys ev'ryfin' he 'joys as much as me."

"That is quite a comprehensive recommendation for a companion," said I. "I suppose you enjoy stopping to fish in every brook, and listen to talks of farmers about pigs and ploughing, and throw stones at birds, and——"

"Well!" interrupted the child, "if dem's de kind of fings *you* likes to do on 'scursions, I guess I don't want to go wiff you."

"Excuse me, dear," said I, quickly. "You spoke of going with your father; and I merely chanced to think of what men seem to enjoy when they go into the country."

"Gracious me!" the child exclaimed. "Where did you ever know such awful men as dat? I guess your gran'ma ain't very puttikular about de kind of folks you get 'quainted wiff."

I attempted to annihilate the child with an indignant glance, but did not succeed, for she looked at me curiously and repeated her question; finally I meekly answered:

"I don't know any such men, dear, but often I hear men talking in the cars in the city, of where they've been in the country, and what they've done, and unless they've killed something or made fun of somebody they don't seem to have enjoyed themselves."

"Den I guess you never saw my fahver any of dem times," said the child, "for he don't like to kill anyfin' but snakes and 'skeeters. When he goes on 'scursions he shows me ev'ryfin' dat's lovely to look at. Gran'ma says she does b'lieve he'd see somefin' new if he went froo de same road ev'ry day, an' I guess he would, 'cause he always does it when I go wiff him. Sometimes dere's men dat paints pictures comes out to spend Sunday wiff him, an' he shows 'em just where to find fings to make pictures out of."

"Your father must be very different from other men," I ventured to say.

"Well, I 'most always goes wiff 'em on 'scursions, an' dey don't do none of dem horrid fings you said. Guess you ain't seen only one kind of men; my fahver says dere's lots of kinds."

I did not explain to the little defender of her father's sex that my acquaintance with men was

limited and formal, and that the only man with whom I had talked freely had never conversed much about excursions. One of the many differences of opinion between Frank Wayne and me was that he had insisted that my ideas of the masculine mind and nature had been gathered from chance remarks of men whose talk I had overheard, and it did not promote further confidence between us that I retorted to this that his ideas of women had been deduced from paragraphs in the humorous newspapers and from the published rantings of some women who professed to represent their sex.

Finding myself recalling this unpleasant episode, I called myself to account for reverting to the past while the present, for one morning at least, was so glorious.

"It's just de day for a good 'scursion," remarked Alice Hope—"just de kind of day my fahver likes. He says dat after de rain has washed de air clean, an' made de dust lie down an' keep still, an' de sun's come out, is just de time for a long walk, if a person wants to get deir eyes full of fings worf seein'. Gran'ma said dis very mornin' dat she was sure my fahver was finkin' more about home dan his business."

"Why shouldn't I enjoy a little walk with this child for guide?" I asked myself suddenly. My landladies had assured me, when I first arrived, that I might feel perfectly safe in roaming about the country near by, for all tramps had been frightened away by a stern local edict, mercilessly enforced, and I need never be out of sight of a house. The air was so bracing that I felt as if I could walk miles.

"Suppose you and I were to make a little trip this morning, dear?" said I. "I fear you would soon be tired."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't," she replied. "My fahver says I'm a regular trottypug—dat means somefin' dat can keep goin' ever so long. Beside, if I do get tired I ain't a bit hard to carry: my fahver says so. Just feel."

She put up her hands so innocently that I should estimate her weight, that I took her quickly into my arms and hugged her soundly. Meanwhile she continued:

"I don't ever get tired, dough, unless we forget to take fings to eat wiff us. Mistress Drusilla fixes awful nice lunch-baskets to carry on 'scursions, if she knows I'm goin' along; I know she does, 'cause she done it for some ladies dat come here

last year. I'll tell her about it, soon as I give her dis letter; den we can start."

"Won't your grandmother be worried at not finding you returning at once?"

"Oh, no; gran'ma says she never worries about me when I's come over here, 'cause she knows where I is. Beside, she says she never 'spects to see me till dinner-time, if I come here in de mornin'. I'll tell Mistress Drusilla about de lunch-basket right away."

Away through the trees hurried the child, while I followed slowly for the parasol, gloves, and other things without which no woman is supposed to venture beyond the enclosing boundaries of her home. I reached the house only two or three minutes later than the child, but already my landladies were in a high state of excitement.

"I've put half a dozen eggs to boil, my dear," said Miss Dorcas, who met me at the door, "and I've got in the basket half a boiled chicken already carved, some ham sandwiches, three kinds of cake, and some oranges. Do you think there will be enough?"

"Mercy!" I exclaimed. "We shan't be gone more than an hour or two. I imagine a bit of cake in a napkin, to comfort the child when she

thinks herself hungry, will be sufficient. Of course we will be home by dinner-time."

"So every one thinks, dear, when starting for a walk in this country; but you've no idea how much there is to see, and how our fresh air sharpens the appetite. And dear little Alice is growing, you know, and growing children——"

"Ah! I see," said I, thinking it wiser to carry what had been provided than to protest. We might meet some poor person who would gratefully accept the surplus.

"If you only say so, my dear," said Miss Dorcas, "I can just as well pack a custard pie so you can carry it."

"Please don't, I beg," said I: "I don't want to ruin the child's digestion."

"Just as you say, my dear. About something to drink: milk soon spoils in this weather if it is carried long, but every living body on every road knows Alice, so you can get a glass of milk anywhere, and if you stop at any house for a minute the folks will be sure to ask you to take a cup of tea."

Meanwhile, Mistress Drusilla and the basket, escorted by little Alice, came from the kitchen. The instant the old woman placed the basket on

a table in the hall the child peered into it and asked:

"Is you sure you's got enough? Last time I went on a 'scursion wiff a boarder she got so hungry dat I was 'most starved."

"We've enough," said I, "to last several families from breakfast to noon." Then, in fear that the custard pie might still be imposed upon us, I seized the basket and began the excursion by hurrying into the path that led from the house. As I looked backward to see if the child was following, I beheld the two old sisters standing side by side at the door and regarding us with an affectionate solicitude which really was touching.

"Dis is just de loveliest air dis mornin'," remarked my companion and guide as she led the way to the road. "Don't it make you feel as if you could just fly?"

"Almost," I admitted as a gentle breeze passed by, laden with a mingled perfume of ocean and clover-blooms.

"I'd like to fly, just to see how it feels," said the child; "but, seein' I can't, I don't like to feel as if I would. You know how not to feel dat way, don't you?"

"I fear I don't."

"Why, you just make yourself heavier, den you don't feel so light. Don't you see?"

"But how? Are we to load ourselves with stones, as I am told travellers sometimes do on windy mountain-sides?"

"Goodness! no," said the child, lifting the lid of the basket. "All you have to do is to eat somefin'—all you can, an' as soon as you can. I wonder if dese eggs is hard-boiled?" (Here she stooped and cracked one against a stone.) "Yes, dey are. Gran'ma says hard-boiled eggs is heavy on one's stomach. Don't you fink you'd better try one?"

"Thanks, no," said I, breathing in great draughts of the delicious air. "The mere mention of anything to eat is dreadful."

"Dat's funny," murmured the child, between mouthfuls of egg. "I fink it's lovely. I guess you don't like eggs, do you?"

"No—yes; but not to-day."

"I's awful glad," said the child, taking another. I remembered Miss Dorcas' remark about "growing fast," so I did not restrain her. Meanwhile, we slowly descended a long hill and reached a little brook, along one side of which was a path, into which the child stepped.

"Where are you leading me, dear?" I asked.

"To de big oaks," said she, pointing far ahead; "don't you see?"

I recognized them as a clump of trees I had admired from my place of lookout on the top of the hill. Evidently my little guide had a sense of the picturesque.

"Do you admire the big oaks, dear?" I asked.

"'Deed I do," she replied. "You just ought to hear my fahver tell me stories about 'em—about how George Washiton rested under 'em, an' folks had church under 'em, an' some uvver folks hid in de tops of 'em, an' Injuns had chats under 'em, an' missionaries had prayers under 'em. An', oh, dey's just de loveliest place in de world to eat lunch under. I wish I was dere dis minute."

"You poor child!" said I, looking into the basket and finding but one egg remaining; "are you hungry?"

"I's 'most starved," said the child, stopping in the path and turning upon me a mournful look. "I don't see how I can wait till we gets to de big oaks."

"Try a sandwich, dear," said I, opening the basket. My hand found two instead of one, but

the child did not recognize the difference; she took both, and ate them as she walked.

The "Big Oaks" were not of the great variety of views to which distance lends enchantment. The nearer we approached, the more majestic and picturesque they appeared, and on reaching them I was delighted to find that the owner, with a spirit unusual in this land of superfluous trees, had the ground beneath them kept clear of fallen boughs, straggling weeds, and other customary cumberers of America's natural groves. I spread upon the ground a light shawl I had brought with me, and, reclining upon it, cast my eyes along the broad hill from which we had come. Everything really rural was new, strange, and delightful. My family had spent summers in country villages constructed by New York architects, but here was a wide expanse of country broken into small fragments by stone walls, hedge-rows, and cliffs. It seemed like the country I had seen described in some books—the country of the farmer, not the landscape-gardener—and I gazed upon it with delighted eyes. Little Alice Hope approached me occasionally; I heard her footsteps, saw her figure to the right or left, but I was not in the mood to be interrupted, even by a very

sweet and companionable child, though I promised myself to love her the more for not disturbing me during the happy half-hour I spent in absorbing the view before me. I was in closer communion with nature than ever before; she, the truest child of nature I had ever met, evidently was in sympathy with me. I did not forget how she, the dear child, had taught me to lose myself in looking at the ocean, a day or two before. Doubtless now she, like me, was again becoming the mere mirror, the recipient, of what heaven and earth were spreading before us in such bewildering profusion. Probably she was longing to voice her impressions; the language would be childish, but there are times when heart speaks so truly to heart that words are nothing.

"Alice, dear," I said, turning my head lazily on the arm on which it rested.

In an instant I heard gentle foot-falls near me; then they paused.

"Alice, dear," I continued, "are you happy? Isn't it lovely? Are you filled with——"

"It's lovely," she replied—"all but de sandwiches; dey's got so much mustard in 'em dat dey bites my froat."

I looked up quickly, and saw a pretty little

mouth discolored with egg, and two little hands, one of which held a leg of chicken and the other a piece of cake. I suppose my look was not sympathetic, for the child trembled a little as she said quickly:

"Don't be 'fraid. I left you 'most all de sandwiches. Miss Dorcas said when she fixed 'em dat she hoped dey'd suit you, 'cause she'd put extra mustard in 'em, 'cause all boarders from de city always liked lots of mustard."

I arose hastily and examined the lunch-basket —not for selfish reasons, but merely from curiosity as to juvenile capacity. It contained one egg, a single (and small) bit of cold chicken, several sandwiches, but no cake. Then I lifted it; it had been heavy when we started, certainly not more than an hour before; now it was very light. I replaced the basket on the ground, looked at the child from various points of view, and at last placed one hand cautiously on her waist-band and another on her back. Finally I asked:

"Where did you put all the luncheon, dear?"

"In my mouf," was the reply.

"H'm! Do you feel bad in any way?"

"No, indeed. I feels awful good. I feels like

takin' a real nice long walk, now, soon as you's had your lunch."

"I'm not hungry," said I, abruptly closing the basket, picking up my shawl, and starting forward. Was it possible that this child, and her grandmother and parent, were so poor that they were not properly fed? I knew, from what home missionaries had told me, that many of my pupils came breakfastless to school. Could it be that this cheery, uncomplaining little sprite was really a child of poverty and with characteristic American fortitude had been bravely ignoring her misfortune while in the presence of a stranger? I would find out.

"Alice, dear," said I, "at what time did you breakfast?"

"Oh, about half-past seven—de usual time."

"You weren't very hungry, were you?"

"H'm! I guess you don't 'member when you was a little girl, do you?"

"Perhaps not," said I. "Did you eat much?"

"I don't know," said she meditatively. "Let's see: I had boiled hominy, an' oyster stew, an' fried ham, an' some toast—dat's all, 'xcept some milk an' two cups of cocoa."

I looked at her in amazement. She was not a

large child, nor at all rotund. Unconsciously I recalled Goldsmith's rustics in the presence of the village teacher:

> And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,
> That one small head could carry all he knew.

Evidently it was time to change the subject, so I said:

"What are we to do next? You are the guide of this expedition, you know."

"I fink," said the child, after a moment of thoughtfulness, during which she did not relax her attention to a bit of cold chicken, "I fink we'd better walk up de Damascus road; dere's lots of blackberries an' cherries on top of de hill. Den we can go down-hill to Smiff's farm; dey have awful nice milk dere."

This was not what I had expected. I had been looking forward to a hap-hazard ramble which should be made delightful by the surprises and humors of childish prattle, but it seemed that Miss Alice Hope had designed a mere progressive luncheon-party. I was disappointed. Probably my face said as much, for soon the child remarked:

"If you don't like dat way, let's go out by de Norf road; den we can rest at de house where dey

always give sweet cider an' molasses-cake to nice folks dat stop dere to rest."

"Any way you like," I replied, with becoming resignation. I could at least gratify my curiosity as to the digestive capacity of a child.

We started on the Damascus road. It wound leisurely around a long hill, but, fortunately, the basket was not so heavy as when we started; indeed, it was so light that I did not scruple to let the child carry it. We found the blackberries, and the cherries too, and Alice Hope could not seem to get enough of them, although to me both tasted rather bitter. While my guide fed herself I lounged on a great warm flat stone under a cherry-tree and wondered what would happen were that child ever obliged to keep a church-fast of any kind. Years before, I had wondered at the appetites of some delicate-looking girls whom I met at evening parties, but none of them ever seemed so insatiately hungry as this atom of humanity. In the course of time, however, the child threw herself down beside me, and exclaimed:

"Just isn't dis world a pooty nice place?"

"That depends," said I, suddenly becoming severe of soul, "upon the place from which one looks at it."

"Make b'lieve it's dis place, den," said the child. "We's got nice fings to look at, an' it's nice wevver, an' we don't feel so starved dat we wish de dinner-bell would ring right away. I fink it's lovely—or I will, when we get to Smiff's farm an' have a lot of nice milk to drink."

"My dear little girl," said I, feeling that the time had fully come for the utterance of some cautionary remarks, "I'm afraid that you think too much of mere animal pleasures. Eating and drinking seem to have filled your mind this morning to the exclusion of everything else."

"Well," said the child, after a moment of wondering stare, "I's sure I's got to. How's I goin' to grow if I don't eat a lot? An' if I don't grow, how's I goin' to be a woman? An' if I don't get to be a woman, how's I ever goin' to be any good to anybody, 'xcept gran'ma and my fahver, an' maybe Mistress Drusilla an' Miss Dorcas?"

This seemed a reasonable question; but I dissented from the conclusion. I had been taught that a ravenous appetite was bad for any one, and my settled convictions were not to be disturbed by the hunger of an unreasoning child, so I said:

"I hope, dear, you will grow to be a strong,

good woman and be very useful in the world; but you can't do it by thinking only of eating."

"Well, anyway, my fahver says it takes food to make brains, an' de reason women ain't so smart as men is dat dey don't eat 'nough."

Women not as smart as men! All my suspicions of the father of this child came back to me with cumulative force. It was bad enough that any man should have such thoughts; it was simply shameful that he should have put them into the mind of a child.

"My fahver takes me big walks," continued little Alice, "so I'll get a good appetite, an' know my own mind so I won't lose it when I see it, and fink about somefin' else. He says he once knowed a lady dat would have been an angel if she'd only ate 'nough to know her own mind. I don't see how she didn't, I's sure; I don't ever have no trouble to eat 'nough."

"So it seems," said I.

"You know your mind, don't you?" the child asked, raising the cover of the basket; "'cause, if you don't, here's——"

I interrupted by taking the basket and making a mid-morning lunch on sandwiches. I was not hungry, but masculine criticisms of women always

disturbed my mental equilibrium and made me angry. I felt like consuming something; the remaining luncheon could endure it with least annoyance to any one.

"You's feedin' your brains, ain't you?" said the child, opening her eyes wonderingly. "I's glad you ain't dat kind my fahver told about."

Suddenly I threw away a sandwich I had in my hands, and closed the lid of the basket with a sharp snap. If, as one of my landladies had intimated, this child unconsciously told stories at home, she should have no excuse to tell one at my expense.

"I's so glad you's got froo," said Alice Hope, "'cause now we can go to de milk place, an' den to de cider-an'-molasses-cake place. I was 'fraid you wasn't goin' to be hungry a bit, an' den we wouldn't have no fun. But it don't take long to see dat you ain't dat kind. Gracious! just didn't you eat like ev'ryfin' while you was doin' it?"

We soon reached a crossing of the road, and little Alice, turning to the left, said:

"Come on. Dis is de way to de Smiff farm, where dey always give folks nice milk, an' de cider-an'-molasses-cake place is just——"

"Let us go the other way," said I. The child

looked at me inquiringly, then pathetically. Evidently she wanted milk, cider, and cake. But I was obdurate. Besides, I was determined to teach her that an unrestrained appetite was absolutely sinful. I did not doubt that her father and grandmother loved her dearly; but love, in itself, is no training for the duties of life. I had seen other children killed by kindness: no such fate should befall this little innocent—this child of exceptional promise—if I could properly tell her what her clear little head was wise enough to receive.

"Alice, dear," said I, as the child reluctantly followed me on the road which led away from milk, cider, and cake, "don't you know that if you eat as heartily as you have done this morning—and in summer, too—you are in danger of becoming sick?"

"Goodness! no. Real sick, or only make-believe sick?" the child asked, with a fearless smile.

"Real sick, of course," said I. "I am not in the habit of making fun of serious subjects and scaring little girls. I like to see children well fed; it almost breaks my heart to look at some of my school-children who do not get enough to eat. But——"

"Den why don't you——"

"Feed them myself?" I wish I could, dear; but only a millionaire could do it. But, as I began to say, you, a child, have eaten more this morning than I, a woman grown, would eat in two or three days. It isn't right."

"Dear me! the child exclaimed, with a tender, pitiful look, "is you always 'fraid to ask Mistress Drusilla or Miss Dorcas for more? I'll ask 'em for you, if you don't like to."

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed, curbing an inclination to be angry. "I don't mean that I do not have enough to eat. Those good old women do everything they can to tempt me to take more; but——" [here I tried to put force into my countenance as well as my words], "but I won't be persuaded to take more than I want."

"Say, den you better do de uvver way, if you know what's good for you. You ought to hear my fahver tell about de two men dat built houses. Did you ever hear about dat?"

"Not that I can remember."

"Well, 'twas dis way: I can't tell it as good as my fahver, but I's pooty sure I know it all. Once dere was two men dat went to work an' built houses. One of 'em found somefin' solid to build

his house on, but de uvver went an' put de timbers right on de sand. Well, one day, along come a big storm, an' it rained like ev'ryfin', an' de wind blowed awful, but it didn't trouble de man dat had his house on somefin' solid—'way down on de rock. But de uvver man—when de rain come down in his yard it washed all de sand out from under de house, an' left a big empty place dere, so when de wind come along it had a big hole to tumble de house down into."

"What has this story to do with eating?" I asked, somewhat shocked by the lack of application.

"Well, my fahver says it wasn't made about eatin'; but he told it to our preacher dat way one day, an' said if de preacher ate more he wouldn't get so tired out an' find ev'ryfin' so dark-lookin', an' de preacher's wife told gran'ma, pooty soon after, dat her husband begun to get fat an' jolly an' have 'vivals of religion in de church. I don't know what dem fings is; but gran'ma says dey make de preacher awful happy, an' my fahver says it's all 'cause he's got a solid—solid—oh, dear! what do you call dem fings dat houses stand on?"

"Foundations?"

"Yes—dat's it! 'cause he's got a solid foundation now. Say! I's so firsty dat I don't know what to do."

"We'll get some water at the first farm-house we come to, dear," I replied.

"I don't 'xactly want water; I does wish I had a drink of milk, like de Smiffs give folks."

I turned about and started in the direction the child had first taken. After that Miss Alice did not loiter behind, but took the lead, and moved forward so rapidly with her little feet that soon I began to tire of the pace, and, complaining of weariness, leaned against a stone wall to rest. The child looked at me curiously for a moment, and then said:

"I guess *you* hasn't got a very solid foundation, has you? *I* feel as if I could walk all day long; but den *my* foundation is all right."

"So I should imagine," said I, suggestively shaking the basket, which contained only a sandwich or two.

We went on to the "Smiff" farm, and Alice Hope speedily found a way of getting some milk. It required very little persuasion to make me also take some. The women of the house regarded me with devouring eyes, after the manner of

country-people in general when they see strangers. After we departed the child remarked:

"Dem's awful silly people. One of 'em asked me if I'd got a new muvver, an' when I said 'no' she said it kind o' looked as if I was goin' to have."

I did not wish to learn any of the gossip or facts that might be current about the matrimonial intentions of the child's father, but I could not help a sudden fear for the future of my little companion were her father to fall in love after the accidental manner of most men. I had seen many good men unfortunately tied for life by merely lingering too long over the smile, the prattle, even the pose, of some girl whom I knew to be of unformed character and small soul; and some of the worst of these blunderers were widowers. I wondered, as we strolled along hand in hand, how a father with such a child as Alice Hope could marry again without earnest thought as to how the change would affect his daughter. The more I thought on the subject, the more apprehensive I became for the child's future. I became so absorbed in the thought that I almost resolved to break my determination to know no one in the vicinity. I certainly was skilful enough at con-

versation to learn from my landladies the name of the woman, if there really were one, of whom Alice's father was fond; then I might become acquainted with her, and impress her with the child's unusual sweetness and character. If she were truly womanly and conscientious, she could not take offence. My long and varied knowledge of child-nature ought to be to her sufficient excuse for my interest in her prospective daughter.

Evidently little Alice had forgotten the personal remark made at the "Smiff" farm, for at each turn of the road she announced the distance which still separated us from the place where cider and molasses-cake were always offered to visitors, and when finally we reached the house she took me in so suddenly that I had not time to protest against such intrusion. She led me into the sitting-room, and was greeted with affection and delight by a motherly-looking old lady, to whom she said:

"Missis Tree, I told de teacher you folks always gave cider an' molasses-cake to people dat come in to see you."

The old lady laughed, looked at me, and said:

"One word for you an' two for herself. I know that youngster of old. So you're to be the new teacher, eh? Well, I'm glad you've got into the

neighborhood early enough to get 'quainted 'round. What might your name be?"

"My name is Ruth Brown," said I; "but I am not to teach here. My school is in New York."

"Oh!" said the old lady, with as much emphasis as if I had been imparting valuable information. "Dear me!" Then she looked at me earnestly, as if I were the first human being she had seen in ages. How long she might have stared I do not know, for she was recalled to the purpose of our visit by Miss Alice remarking:

"Missis Tree's molasses-cake is awful good; it's almost as good as gran'ma's."

Mrs. Tree laughed again, and left the room, though as she went through the door she glanced backward, apparently for another look at me. She was welcome to it—poor woman! If my face could break for a moment the dreary routine of a farmer's wife, I would be only too glad. The cider and cake were brought in profusion, and while the child consumed both rapidly, and I leisurely found them good, the old lady steadily consumed us with her eyes. Finally she said:

"Alice, I hope you are fond of Miss Brown?"

"'Deed I am," replied the child, through a

mouthful of cake. "She's the nicest new friend I ever had."

"That's right, child; that's right," said the old lady with emphasis. Apparently I had made a favorable impression, and, as I always had credited old people with much shrewdness in judging human nature, I felt flattered. When we arose to go, the old lady insisted I should go into her parlor a moment, to see a framed "sampler" worked by her great-grandmother a hundred years before. No sooner were we apart from the child than the old lady said to me rapidly, and almost in a whisper:

"I do hope, Miss Brown, that you realize what a dear, smart little thing Alice is."

"Indeed I do," said I heartily. "I have already learned to love her dearly."

"I'm so glad—*so* glad!" said she. Then she startled me by kissing me on each cheek, and apologizing for the liberty she had taken.

As we resumed our excursion I found myself wondering what could be the mystery of public interest in Alice Hope. That every one liked the child I could easily understand; but why should they be solicitous about her? From her own stories, I imagined her home-life must be happy. Could it be, as I had begun to suspect, that her

father was about to remarry, and had selected a bride of whom the family acquaintance did not approve? The mere thought increased my solicitude for the child, so that I placed my hand on her shoulder and drew her closely to me as we walked side by side. As we reached the next crossing, little Alice stopped, looked each way, and said:

"Here's de dear old big road. I just love it, 'cause it's de way my fahver always comes home from de city."

"If you like it so much, let's rest beside it for a while," said I, spreading my shawl at the shady side of a clump of young sassafras-trees that had been washed by the shower and were diffusing a faint perfume in the warm air. I seated myself upon the shawl, and the child, throwing herself down, pillowed her head in my lap and began looking vacantly into the sky, while I looked thoughtfully into her dear little face and begged Heaven to forgive me for every impatient thought I ever had toward children. How long we were silent I do not know, but suddenly the child's eyes, wandering toward mine, studied my face a moment; then she sprang up and threw her arms around my neck, and exclaimed:

"You's just nicer dan any uvver new person I ever knowed."

I returned her caresses a hundred times, as I realized that soon I must part from her. She clung closely to me, and I prayed that I might never forget the sensation of those dear little arms so tightly clasped around me. But suddenly I heard some one approaching—evidently a man or boy, for the lively whistling of an air from "Patience" was my first warning. I hastily prepared to look unconcerned. Little Alice, somewhat unceremoniously placed upon her feet, looked around, and shouted:

"Oh! dere's my fahver!"

As she ran to meet him, I hastily arose and looked quickly over my attire. Then I saw the child held in the arms of a broad-shouldered man who was kissing her repeatedly. As he released her and turned his face toward me, he exclaimed:

"Ruth Brown!"

And I, feeling as if the earth were reeling under me, gasped:

"Frank Wayne!"

SIXTH DAY.

THE UNEXPECTED HAPPENS.

"MISS BROWN," said Frank Wayne, quickly recovering his self-possession, though, from old acquaintance, I would not have imagined he had lost it, "I'm more thankful than I can tell that my daughter has found so good a friend."

I did not for a moment doubt that he fully meant what he said; whatever his faults, he always had been absolutely truthful. Nevertheless, I quickly replied:

"She never would have found me had I imagined that—that——"

"That she was my daughter?"

"She said her name was Alice Hope; I never heard her called by any other name."

"I am very glad," said he, raising his hat—"I am very glad, for her sake, that you were kept in ignorance. She was christened Alice Hope, and seldom thinks of her family name. Perhaps," he continued, with a frank old-time smile which

I never had forgotten, "you'll pardon me if I'm a little glad for your sake, too? It is true that she is my daughter, yet every one who has met her seems to think her well worth knowing."

"I should be the last one to dispute it," said I, looking down at the child, who stood motionless as a statue, except that her eyes, larger than ever before, wandered rapidly from her father to me, and from me back to her father. "But I never imagined who was her father, or that his home was anywhere near."

"I'm very sure you did not," said he, all vestige of his smile disappearing. Then came an awkward pause. I wished he would have tact enough to take himself away, even if he took my little friend with him—take himself rudely if necessary, rather than prolong my discomfort.

"I declare," exclaimed Alice Hope at last, finding her tongue, "I do b'lieve you bofe knowed each uvver, an' I didn't know noffin' about it."

"You're quite right, my darling," said Frank. "I was acquainted with Ruth—with Miss Brown—before there was any such little girl as you, and I found her the best woman in the world."

I was unable to make a similar speech in reply, but, for fear the child would ask some question

that would make the situation more unpleasant, I said quickly:

"Yes, Alice, your father called at our house sometimes, and, besides, we met at church."

"Where are you stopping? I suppose you are passing the summer here?" asked Frank, wisely hurrying to commonplace.

"I am here only for this week," said I quickly.

"She's over at Miss Dorcas' and Mistress Drusilla's," said the child; "but, oh, dear——"

"Then we are all on the way home. Shall we walk along, and get out of this hot sun?" said Frank.

He took a step or two forward, leading the child; I stood an instant trying hard to frame an excuse to return to one of the farm-houses we had passed, but Alice, looking back, returned, took my hand, and said:

"Come along, Teacher."

There was nothing else to be done. Fortunately, I saw my boarding-house on the hill nearly a mile in front of us; I could soon make an excuse to leave the couple and go home by the shortest route, across the fields. So we walked along together, we three. Meanwhile, there was one of

us who did not take part in the discomfort of the others.

"I hope, little darling," said Frank to his child —something had to be said to lessen embarrassment—"that you haven't made yourself troublesome in any way to Miss Brown? I would like her to think you the best little girl in all the world."

"I's sure," was the reply, "dat I's been as good as pie. I hasn't cried—not much, anyway—an I's showed her all my doll-babies, an' she's been awful good to me, too; she's 'mused me rainy days, an' talked to me lots, an' tried to teach me lots of fings. She made me lots of paper dolls yesterday, an', oh, what do you fink? She drawed——"

I gave her arm a quick, savage shake. She looked up inquiringly, and I gave her a warning look in return. Then I said quickly:

"You should tell your father, Alice, how you were a good Samaritan yesterday."

"Oh, yes; an' I'll show him de kittie when he gets home."

"Another cat in the house?" said her father. "I'm afraid we shall have to go into the menagerie business if you continue to collect unfortunate birds and animals."

We were near the place where I should be able to free myself. Oh, that the few remaining steps might be quickly taken! Soon we reached a field through which a path led toward my boarding-house.

"Alice," said I, stopping, "I'll say good-by now, and hurry home, so as not to keep dinner waiting."

"What makes you call me 'Alice' so much?" she asked. "You 'most always calls me 'dear'; an' it's a good deal nicer."

"Good-by, dear," said I, offering her my right hand. She took it, took the other also, and attempted to drag me down to her upturned lips. I raised her, kissed her once, and whispered, softly:

"Remember your promise: not a word about that picture."

"What did you say?" she asked, as I placed her on the ground again.

"Nothing of any consequence," said I, turning away. "Good-day, Mr. Wayne."

"Good-day, Miss Brown."

I hurried along the path through the field as if I were trying to escape a pursuer. I felt my face ablaze and my heart in a tumult. Had ever woman found herself in a position so uncomfortable,

through no fault of her own? I was indignant at fate and at Frank Wayne. Of one thing I was certain: the first train for New York should carry me away from the scene of such humiliation.

Mistress Drusilla met me at the door, and asked for Alice; I said she had gone home—that we had separated at the foot of the hill. Then I hurried to my room and began to pack my trunks, but within half an hour I had such a headache that I was obliged to lie down; an hour later the pain was so intense that I was obliged to abandon my plan of starting for home that day.

"May I come in, my dear?" softly spoke Mistress Drusilla outside my door the next morning.

"Yes," said I, faintly.

"I hope you're better this morning," said the old woman, standing at my bedside and regarding me tenderly. "Hadn't I better send for our doctor? I did so hope you'd be feeling your very best to-day and to-morrow, for—for it's so distressing to feel poorly Sundays, you know. There's a full day before Sunday, though, and we ought to be able to nurse you into feeling all right by that time. 'Twould be a real pity to disappoint folks that'll be going to church for the purpose of see-

ing you. They've heard so much about you, you know, my dear."

"Heard so much? About me? From whom?" I asked rapidly, wondering if I were really awake or only dreaming. How could any one have heard anything about me, when I had met absolutely no one but my landladies and Alice Hope? Could it be that that innocent child—she could not be other than innocent bless her!—was so confirmed in the gossiping habit peculiar to small communities that she had visited all the other houses near by and talked about me? But, even were this true, what could she have said? During our several chance meetings I had said nothing about myself, or anything else in particular; the child had done nearly all the talking.

"Well, I'm sure I don't know, my dear," said Mistress Drusilla. "I suppose they just heard it from one another. *I* never said a word, neither did Miss Dorcas, except to mention your name when folks found we had a boarder and asked who it was. They'd all heard of you before, so I suppose they——"

"Heard of me before?" I echoed, raising my head from my pillow in such haste that Mistress Drusilla retreated toward the door.

"Don't get excited, my dear: it's dreadful bad for headaches," said she, venturing to approach me after recovering from her scare. "You see, after Mr. Wayne married Alice Hope—the daughter is named after her—and came down here to live, some of his friends came here summers to board, and one of them married a gal, like Frank's own wife, who'd been born and brought up here, and he told his wife about Frank's first sweetheart, and so when you came, and they heard your name, they couldn't help putting two and two together."

I covered my face with a palm-leaf fan, and wished that darkness might cover me as a pavilion. Mistress Drusilla continued:

"He said Frank's friends never could understand it, for you were a woman of a million—those were exactly his words, my dear, according to that man's wife—a woman of a million, and nobody could understand why he had changed his heart to a girl like Alice. She's dead and gone now, dear soul; I've not a word to say against her, for she was as sweet and bright and cheery as a lark on a May morning; but—you'll excuse me for saying it to your face—I don't understand it myself, now I've come to know you. And Frank Wayne has always seemed such a good, af-

fectionate, loyal man: there's no young man in this country who's more respected."

In a moment the silence became oppressive. I was thinking rapidly, for the old woman's remarks had led me, from a sense of humiliation at being an object of village gossip, to reviewing old times. I don't know how it happened; I suppose I merely thought aloud, when I finally said:

"It wasn't his fault. I gave him no encouragement. I did not think I loved him."

"So we heard afterward, my dear, through another friend of his, who said you were a prize worth any man's winning, but that Frank had too much of the soul of a gentleman to force himself upon anybody that didn't want him, and I've always said—for I've watched young men in my time—that if his heart was hungering for love that it hadn't got, 'twas no wonder he took Alice Hope in a hurry, for she *was* the sweetest thing, as I've said before, and I don't see how any man could be near her for a little while and not fall in love with her. She'd refused a dozen likely young fellows, some of them very well-to-do, before he came along. But I'm glad everything is fixed between you now."

Again I started from my pillow, and again

Mistress Drusilla retreated to the door as I exclaimed:

"Everything fixed? What do you mean?"

"Why, my dear, only what I've heard. I don't know where folks found it out, but they do say—I've heard it from several—that you and he had made up, and your coming here just now, seeing he's going to begin his summer vacation next week, made me suppose it was so. I haven't asked any questions of his mother-in-law, old Mrs. Hope, and those that have didn't get much consolation, for the old lady said she didn't know anything about it—that she never meddled with Frank's private affairs, and was perfectly willing to wait until he should tell her."

Again I dropped my head upon the pillow and buried my face. This, then, was the meaning of the remarks that had been made to little Alice the day before about the possibility of a new mother—the meaning, too, of the curious looks that had been fastened upon me, which I had attributed to rural curiosity about strangers!

To this I must attribute the kiss given me by the old lady at whose house we had taken cider and cake! Oh, it was dreadful!—dreadful!

"I haven't meddled in the matter in any way,

my dear, I give you my word," resumed Mistress Drusilla, "except, as I supposed the story was true, hearing it from so many, I tried to bring you and little Alice together and have you like her. I thought that if you were to be that youngster's new mother you had a right to know her as soon as possible, for nobody comes to know that child without feeling it a loss that they didn't know her before."

"Mistress Drusilla," said I, "I must go away at once; and I beg of you, as a true woman, who can imagine how another woman in such a position would feel, to explain when I am gone, for my sake as well as his, that all this gossiping story is a dreadful mistake. I have not seen Frank Wayne since his marriage; I have not heard from him, or known anything about him. If I had known he lived here I would not have come here for worlds. I selected your house merely through your advertisement in a New York newspaper."

"Mercy on us!" gasped Mistress Drusilla.

"You will do as I have asked, won't you?" I asked earnestly.

"Indeed I will, my dear; I will do it carefully, as if you were my own daughter, though it'll be with a sore heart. I supposed it all true, and I

hoped——" Here Mistress Drusilla burst into tears and hurried from the room. As she went out, in bounced little Alice Hope.

"Hello, Teacher," she shouted, as if I were half a mile away. "Ain't you up yet?"

"I am feeling very poorly this morning, dear," said I faintly, as she kissed me several times.

"Well, well, I wonder whevver it's de change of wevver? Gran'ma says she finks dat's what's de matter wiff my fahver, 'cause she guesses he didn't sleep much last night, 'cause she heard him walkin' in his room all sorts of times in de night."

I did not reply. Suddenly the child astonished me with a peal of laughter. I looked up inquiringly—indignantly, I fear.

"De funniest fing!" she exclaimed. "Gran'ma tole me I mustn't disturb him dis mornin', 'cause he was quiet an' she guessed he was asleep. But I didn't believe just one kiss would disturb him, so I went in ever so softly, an' he was layin' on de lounge, just de way he come in de house. I wanted to kiss him on de mouf, 'cause his mouf *is* so sweet; but his hand was dere, so I pulled it away a little bit, an' dere was a card in it, an' what do you fink was on de card? Why, your pic-

ture! I never heard of such a funny fing in my life."

Bless the receptive depths of my pillow!

"Say, Teacher," continued the child, after another laugh, "can't you get well right away somehow? 'Cause soon as my fahver wakes up we'll go off on anuvver 'scursion—I don't know where, but he don't ever stay in de house days like dis, an' he's just de nicest person to go on a 'scursion wiff dat you ever saw."

"I hope you will have a real pleasant time, my dear, but I can't go. I am suddenly obliged to return to New York."

"O Teacher!" was the reply, in pitiful tones. I was sorry for the child, but my heart warmed at the thought that she—she, the dear little thing—would be sorry at my departure. I released my face from the hospitable pillow and looked at her: I saw tears coursing down her chubby cheeks, and a most forlorn expression on the little face which usually was so happy. Then I felt tears coming to my own eyes as I realized that I was about to lose my little friend—the first and only friend I had made in years.

"Alice, dear," said I, "come here."

The child sprang upon the bed beside me,

smothered me with kisses, and finally pillowed her cheek, as soft and warm as a rose, upon mine. I returned her caresses with all my heart. She was his child, but she was my friend; how much she had been to me during the past few days I had not fully realized until now. "Blessings brighten as they take their flight." The child finally concluded the interview by saying:

"I wish I could stay longer, but I *must* be home when my fahver wakes up; I'm always de first fing he asks for when he's home."

"Good-by, blessed little girl," said I; "don't ever forget me, I beg of you."

"I don't ever forget anybody," said she, wriggling off the bed and hurrying away.

This breaking of my only tie to the place I was in brought me to my senses and gave me command of myself. Quickly dressing, and completing my packing, I presented myself to my landladies with as composed a face, I fancy, as I ever wore in my life. I asked Mistress Drusilla to find me some one to take my trunks to the station; I even ate a very hearty breakfast, and shamefully snubbed both landladies when they attempted to express sympathy in ways which were extremely creditable to their womanly sense of delicacy.

After breakfast I had nothing to do, so I strolled in the garden. A temptation to go to the pines and recover my hammock was quickly put down. Little Alice might see me there. I had learned that through a rift in the trees a person there could be seen from the garden around her own home. One parting with that child was suffering enough; I could not endure another. Besides, it seemed to me, though the old-fashioned mirror in the hall showed me otherwise, that my face was ablaze, and only the fresh air out of doors could cool it.

I went from one old-fashioned flower-bed to another, picking flowers. My landladies had always told me to clip as freely as I liked, but I had responded only to the extent of a rose or two or a cluster of mignonette. Now, however, as I thought of the heat and solid walls of New York, I wanted to carry with me all possible natural recollections of the country, which never seemed more beautiful than that morning. Mistress Drusilla also was in the garden, hovering about me like a protecting angel—the blessed old blunderer! She passed me occasionally, apparently to give me a chance to speak if I chose; but I kept silence. The subject of our morning's conversation should not again be alluded to if I could help it.

Slowly I filled my left hand, then my arm, with roses, pinks, phloxes, branches of geranium, sprays of southernwood, and branches of lemon verbena. Then I stooped over a plant of forget-me-nots; it was the only one in the garden, so approaching footsteps prompted me not to take much, under the eyes of the owner. As I arose I heard:

"You have very little of it, but can't you spare a single sprig?"

I looked up; the voice was not that of Mistress Drusilla, but of Frank Wayne.

"Certainly," said I, as carelessly, I flatter myself, as if speaking merely to an ordinary acquaintance. Indeed, what else was he, after what had happened? I laid the little cluster in my left hand, selected a blossom and gave it to him.

"A thousand thanks," said he, placing the flower in his breast instead of his button-hole. Then he seized my hand and said very fast:

"Ruth Brown, my daughter says you are going away to-day; and I am sure I am the cause of your sudden departure. I came over to say that I would not have come home had I known you were here, and that it will be far better for me to go at once and leave you to continue your stay.

I hear that you came for your health's sake, and I feel like a felon at having disturbed you."

"You are very thoughtful," I replied, "but really I must return to the city at once." At the same time I tried to disengage my hand, but it was impossible. Frank had always been an amateur gymnast.

"Then," said he, "let me say one thing more. You are the noblest woman alive; I thought so when I first knew you, and I never changed my opinion: so I can't bear to have you think ill of me in any way."

"I don't," said I; "I never did."

"I feared otherwise," said he. "At least I beg you to forigve me for anything I ever said or did that pained you. I had a most unformed, aggressive nature in old times; I have seen it plainly in later years, and blamed myself a thousand times for words which I am sure must have offended you. I beg you to believe that they were not intended as they sounded. Ruth—let me call you by the old name once more—Ruth, you were my God, and I was merely laying my heart bare before you."

"No one could refuse such a complimentary apology," said I with a smile. I was anxious to

end the scene, for scene I was sure it was. Unless my landladies had suddenly changed their natures, those two estimable women were undoubtedly looking from windows commanding that portion of the garden. Again I attempted to release my hand, and I am glad to say I succeeded. Then I turned with great interest to a rose-bush at my left and selected a fine blossom.

"Allow me," said he. "Roses have thorns. Perhaps I know their ways better than you." Then he cut the stem with his pocket-knife and proceeded to remove the thorns, saying, as he did so: "Won't you allow me once more to be numbered among your friends? I took myself away only when in a period of self-examination I believed I was more annoying than pleasing to you. Will you believe me?"

"I never could doubt your word," I replied. "I never did."

"Heaven bless you!" said he. "Then you believed——"

"Please cut me some of these yellow roses," said I; "their stems are a mass of thorns, you see."

"You haven't answered my first question," he replied, attacking the spiny Persian roses. "I asked you to let me be numbered once more among

your friends. I know, as I have said, that I was not entirely an agreeable companion in old times, but I beg you won't think me conceited if I say I am now a better man. I have cultivated the virtue of patience, and I abominate men who insist upon arguing about everything."

"What a remarkable change!" said I, extending my hand for the roses.

"Thank you," said he; "no one has a better right to recognize it." He cut another stem of yellow roses, and, as his knife rapidly broke away the thorns, he continued:

"I've treated every roughness of my nature as mercilessly as I am treating these thorns. But may I remind you once more that you have not answered my first question?"

"Mr. Wayne," said I, "you know I always liked you—as a friend. The break in our acquaintance was not of my making; you simply ceased to call; then I heard——"

"Ruth," said he; then he began to pour forth his story: how one evening, after leaving me, his conscience took him severely to task and convinced him that he was altogether too rugged and self-assertive of nature to be a fit mate for a woman like me, so had hurried away from the city

to try to forget his presumption, and the consequent sorrow. He had gone with a party of friends to the country—just where I had chanced to come for my outing—and met a girl of whom he soon became very fond, and who seemed to like him. What had followed I already knew, but he assured me with the utmost earnestness that his married life had been very happy, and that among his recollections of his wife not one was unpleasant except that of having lost her. I was glad he was unable to see with what satisfaction I listened to this part of his story, for I feared a resemblance to what I had seen in some novels about interviews somewhat similar.

When Frank Wayne ceased talking it was not easy for me to reply. I could only tell him, which I did in entire honesty, that I was very sorry for his misfortune, and that I was very glad that he could find so much consolation by turning to his memory.

"Besides," said I, turning from one of the flower-bushes over which I had leaned while he talked—"besides, you still have your child, and she ought to be enough in herself to make any one happy for a lifetime."

"I am so glad to hear you say so!" said he. "I

sometimes fear that I estimate her too highly—her character, I mean. As for herself, as my daughter she would be dear to me were she a helpless idiot. But she is a constant stimulation to my heart and head; she always needs something, always wants to know something, always is so trustful, and affectionate, and sympathizing, and relies upon me, when I am at home, so entirely for everything, that I feel that I have more than any other man to live for. I have unmade and remade myself for that child's sake, and the task has never been hard or unpleasing. Do you know that if that child continues as she has begun, and reaches womanhood with healthy mind and physique, I shall think that I have really been good for something in this world?"

"You will be quite justifiable in such case," said I. He stood so manly, earnest, noble-looking, and modest, that I could not help admiring him, and wondering why he could not have had a similar face years before.

"Fahver! Fahver!"

Both of us looked in the direction from which the voice came, and we saw little Alice in the edge of the pine grove.

"Teacher? Tea—cher!"

"She wants both of us," said Frank, turning half away, but looking backward at me. "Won't you come?"

To see the child, even afar off, was to break my resolution not to see her again; so I followed the broad-shouldered fellow in front of me, though I could not keep pace with his rapid stride.

"Fahver," said little Alice, who as we approached her got into my hammock, "here's Teacher's hammock, an' I want you to swing me in it. Teacher, you get in too; my fahver's strong enough to swing two people."

"Thank you, dear, but I'd rather look at you, I think."

"Oh, come on!"

"You haven't the heart to disappoint a child, have you?" said Frank, with a mock-solemn look which I remembered very well.

"Come on," repeated the child, looking toward me and holding up a doll. "Besides, I's brought Agonies over for you to see before you go, 'cause you said you liked her best of all my dolls. You can hold her in your lap if you want to."

Compliance was easier than continued refusal, so I seated myself in the hammock beside the child, and the dreadful doll was dropped in my

lap by way of reward. As the hammock moved to and fro, the child began her familiar song:

Swing—swong,
Swing—swong,
Swing, ah, swingee, swing swong!

"Say, fahver," little Alice suddenly shouted, "is you gettin' up a s'prise for me?"

"A surprise?" said Frank from behind us, as he gave the hammock another push. "That's hardly a fair question, darling, and so near your birthday, too. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I fought maybe you was: dat's all," said the child, drawing back some flying locks from the brow of Agonies.

"Christmas is a good way off, and your birthday is not long past," said the father, as he continued to swing the hammock. "So I scarcely think surprises in order. What have you got into your little rattle-trap of a head?"

"I hasn't got anyfin' dere; somebody else put it dere," was the reply. "A lot of folks has been wantin' to know if I was goin' to have a new muv-ver, an' I fought mebbe you was gettin' up dat kind of s'prise for me."

The hammock began to move more rapidly and

higher, at least it seemed so to me, for I began to feel dizzy. Any confidences that might ensue were not for me to hear. Then I rapidly recalled the remarks I had heard the day before, and what Mistress Drusilla had said to me, and I felt dizzier.

"Stop the hammock, please," said I. "It is too much for my head."

A strong hand on the cords stopped the hammock in an instant, and I got out so quickly that the motion threw little Alice forward to the ground, the first result of which was a long howl. I was on my knees in an instant, and had the child in my arms, trying to console her. Her father attempted to take her, but she clung tightly to me, as I passed my hand frequently across her forehead and wiped the tears from her eyes.

"Ground is so awful hard when you lays down on it when you don't mean to!" said she.

"Indeed it is, poor little darling!" said her father. "Don't you want me to carry you right home and bind a wet handkerchief on your forehead, as grandma does when you tumble down?"

"No, I guess not," was the reply. "Teacher's hand comforts my head lots."

"Bless the teacher's hand!" said the father.

"Say, fahver!" said the child, a moment later, "if you *is* gettin' up a s'prise for me—dat kind of a s'prise I told you about, you know, about gettin' me a new muvver—I fink *I'd* like it to be Teacher."

My hand dropped from Alice's forehead; my left arm, with its wealth of flowers, fell by my side. But the child did not fall; she only clung the tighter to me. From the silence that followed I indulged a wild hope that her father had been frightened away. But in a moment I felt warm breath on my cheek, and then a low voice said:

"Ruth, I alone am not worthy of you; but could you consent to be this dear child's mother?"

"Do it! Do it!" exclaimed little Alice, suddenly forgetting her pain and looking into my face with dancing eyes. What could I do? Only what I did. I arose, took the child in my arms, and kissed her. Seeing this, Frank Wayne put his arms around us, and kissed us both—kissed us repeatedly.

When finally I placed the child on her feet again, it was for an excuse to cast my eyes downward. As for little Alice, she immediately looked up at her father and said:

"Fahver, ain't I a good guesser?"

"I suppose so, darling; but why do you ask?"

"'Cause I guessed right about the s'prise—about de new muvver. I just knowed who it was goin' to be."

"Indeed! How did you come to guess it, I should like to know?"

"Cause I saw you kissin' her picture dis mornin' when you was asleep on de lounge."

"Alice—darling!"

"I did, sure's I'm alive. Anyway, it was in your hand, an' your hand was right against your mouf. I told gran'ma about it, just before I come over here, an' she said she guessed it was a sure sign."

Then it was Frank's turn to look down and flush, so I felt encouraged to look up: seeing his embarrassment, I found courage enough to laugh. He raised his head quickly, with the rarest smile I ever saw on a human face, and said:

"I'll be glad to be laughed at to all eternity, if you'll do the laughing, Ruth—darling."

I went to New York that afternoon. Happy though I was, and strong enough to meet whatever the world might thereafter have in store for me, I could not let the village gossips see me again and whisper to one another, "I told you so." But

first, three people sat in that hammock and talked rapidly and cheerily of the future. The smallest of the three did the most talking; but whenever her father attempted to restrain her I stopped him, reminding him that I had promised only to be Alice Hope's mother, so she was the person most concerned.

All this occurred more than a year ago, yet none of the parties concerned seem to have any cause for regret. The only notable change—except that I am the happiest woman who ever lived—is in Alice Hope: her dolls, or "babies," as she persisted in calling them, are entirely neglected; even Agonies, whom she most pitied, departed unmourned in an ash-barrel. The child spends all her waking moments in as close proximity as possible to a tiny being whom she calls "Buvver."

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